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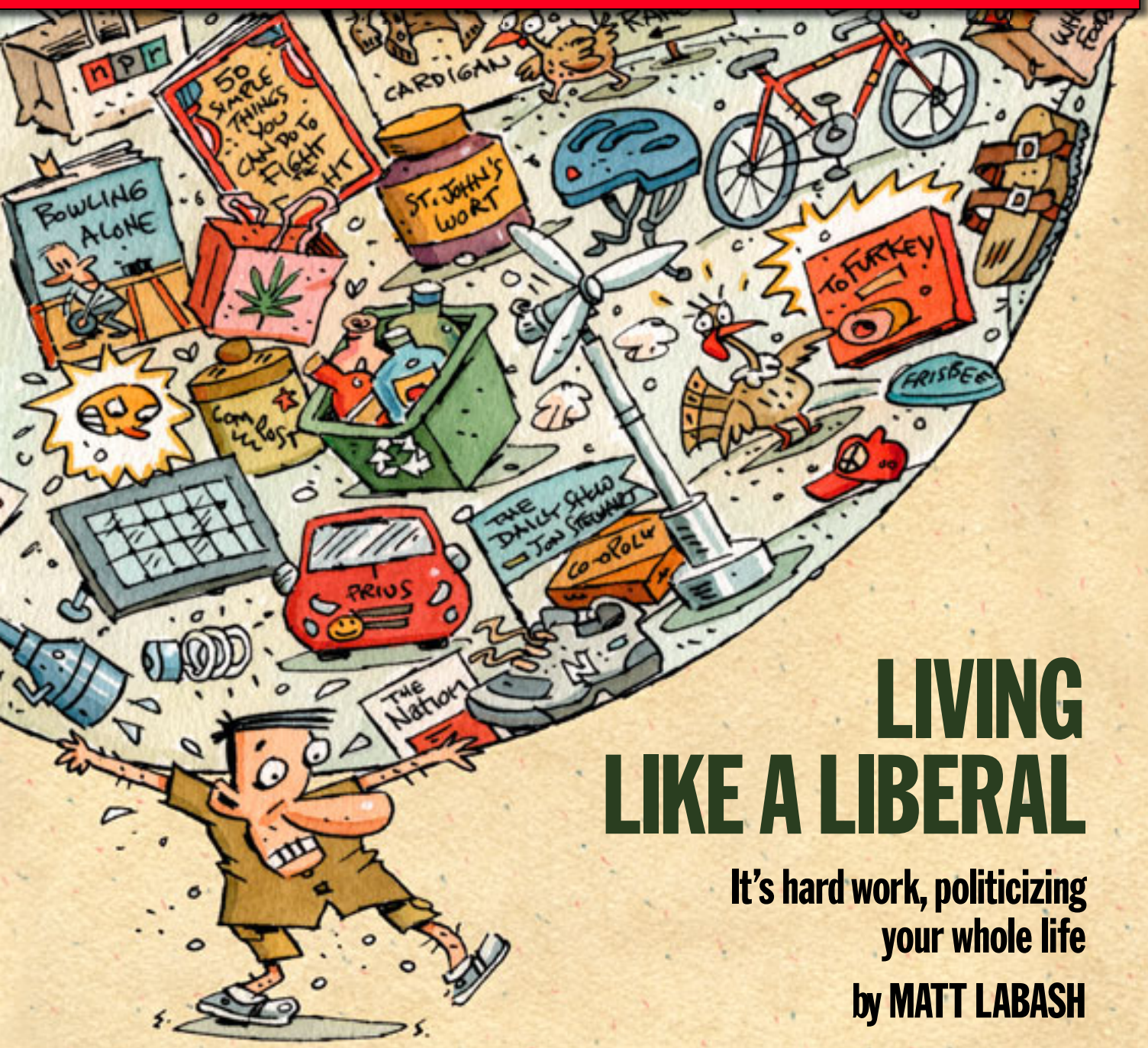

LIVING LIKE A LIBERAL

It's hard work, politicizing your whole life

by MATT LABASH

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NCM announces the release of its U.S. $5 Gold Coin hoard, as supplies dwindle.

Are these…

THE LAST U.S. GOV'T $5 GOLD PIECES?

Struck in precious PURE 22KT GOLD, these official legal tender coins have the notable distinction of being among the LAST $5 GOLD COINS issued by the United States Government! Rising gold prices have made U.S. Gold coins more desirable to collectors and investors alike. In fact, a recent announcement by the U.S. Gov't stated that fractional sizes of American Eagle Gold Uncirculated Coins, like the $5 Gold Piece, will no longer be produced. And, the 2010 $5 American Eagle Bullion Gold Piece, normally released at the start of the year, was not released until June 10th – a full five months late!

Today, National Collector's Mint announces a special limited release of the ***U.S. $5 American Eagle Gold Pieces.*** The American Eagle Gold Piece is hailed as one of the most beautiful coins ever due to the breathtakingly beautiful obverse design featuring Miss Liberty in frosted relief by engraver Augustus Saint-Gaudens. A design featuring a noble family of American Eagles by Texan artist Miley Busiek graces the reverse. You might expect to pay a premium for gold coins of this caliber and quality. But now, you can own an original ***U.S. $5 American Eagle Gold Piece*** for an extraordinarily affordable price.

Initially, our price was to be set at $219 per coin. However, during this limited special release, these ***U.S. $5 American Eagle Gold Pieces*** can be yours for only $199, and as little as $169 when you acquire the collector's quantity of twenty $5 Gold Pieces. But you must act now. **Due to extremely limited availability and volatility in the precious metals markets, we can only guarantee this price for 10 days.**

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Each of the last ***U.S. $5 American Eagle Gold Pieces*** is guaranteed to be in near-perfect Brilliant Uncirculated condition and comes with our individually numbered Certificate of Authenticity. Distribution will take place in registration number order. So, the earliest reservations receive the lowest registration numbers. There is a strict limit of twenty coins per customer. Reservations will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. As always, your satisfaction is guaranteed.

How To Order

To assure your reservation, we ask you to call us immediately Toll-Free 1-800-799-MINT, Ext. 8192 (1-800-799-6468). Timely mail orders will be accepted if directed to: National Collector's Mint, Dept. 8192, 8 Slater St., Port Chester, NY 10573.

You may reserve one of the last ***U.S. $5 American Eagle Gold Pieces*** for $199 plus $4.50 shipping & handling, 3 for only $552 ppd, 5 for only $895 ppd, 10 for only $1,725 ppd, or 20 for only $3,380 ppd. Deluxe velvet presentation cases are only $3.50 each ppd. So, don't delay. Avoid disappointment and future regret.

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Marriage is Under Attack by Liberal Politicians and Judges

It's Time To Stand Up for Marriage

Join the Summer for Marriage Tour 2010!

To help promote the importance of preserving marriage as the union of One Man and One Woman, the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) is sponsoring the **Summer for Marriage Tour 2010**. We're rallying supporters of traditional marriage in cities across the country. Look for the location below closest to you.

Augusta, ME – July 14
Manchester, NH – July 15
Albany, NY – July 17
Providence, RI – July 18
Trenton, NJ – July 20
Annapolis, MD – July 21
Columbus, OH – July 23
Lima, OH – July 24
Indianapolis, IN – July 26
Madison, WI – July 27
St. Paul, MN – July 28
St. Cloud, MN – July 29
Rochester, MN – July 30
Des Moines, IA – August 1
Sioux City, IA – August 3
Atlanta, GA – August 7
Tampa, FL – August 8
Raleigh, NC – August 10
Charleston, WV – August 11
Harrisburg, PA – August 13
Washington, DC – August 15

Liberal politicians, judges and gay marriage advocates are intent on redefining marriage for all of society. Children need both a mother **and** a father, but if gay marriage is imposed on America, moms and dads will be considered to be interchangeable – "any two will do." The best interests of children will no longer be an objective of our marriage laws, and government will treat believers in traditional marriage as bigots. The consequences to children, families, people of faith and society as a whole would be profound.

Go to www.marriagetour2010.com
for more information and to show your support!

This special website will allow you to follow the tour and register your support.

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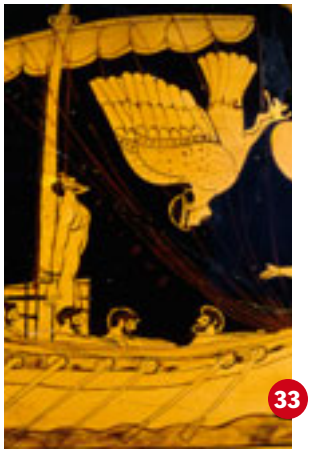

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The Coming Student Loan Debacle

THE SCRAPBOOK was not a huge fan of the federally subsidized student loan system that got replaced by the Obama administration and the Democratic Congress along with their takeover of the health care system earlier this year.

Under the system in place since the mid-1960s, private lenders competed for the right to originate and service the loans; interest rates were subsidized and fixed by law; and the government stepped in to make up the losses when Joey and Phoebe Graduate failed to earn enough with their Therapeutic Dance degrees to make their loan payments down the road. The banks were guaranteed a profit, but not too much of one. If their borrowing costs fell far enough, they had to kick back some of their earnings to the feds.

All in all, it was a very unlovely system, the most noxious kind of big government/big business corporatism—and one that came with a toxic side-effect. Just as cheap, subsidized mortgages led to a price bubble in the housing market, subsidized student loans had the effect of inflating the price of higher education (one of the last, great unpopped bubbles in our economy, by the way). University administrators could raise tuition and room and board with impunity, secure in the knowledge that the government would be subsidizing their customers.

H.L. Mencken defined Puritanism (unfairly but memorably) as "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy." Obama Democrats are afflicted with Money Puritanism: the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be making a profit. In the case of their student loan "reform," that someone was the private lenders, who are henceforth to be replaced by the Department of Education, which will now make the loans directly to borrowers. By eliminating the profits of the middle man, the idea was, federal funds could be freed up for more subsidies to the students—i.e., to the colleges and universities (more inflation!). What could possibly go wrong?

Well, a year ago, owing to its deep paternal devotion to SCRAPBOOK Jr., THE SCRAPBOOK applied for financial aid at a fine public university, and in the process procured a small student loan from a private lender. The worst part of that process by far? Filling out

THOMAS FLUHARTY

online a form known as FAFSA, aka the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. And who is the bureaucratic progenitor of the FAFSA? Why, none other than the U.S. Department of Education, the new monopoly provider of federal student loans. (Never trust a federal program with the word "free" in its title: Navigating that FAFSA website cost THE SCRAPBOOK many hours that we will never get back.) So, the new Obama student loan system will be brought to you by the same folks who run the FAFSA. Wonderful.

Given all of this, we were unsurprised to receive an informational email last week from the associate provost for enrollment at SCRAPBOOK Jr.'s university, warning of a few possible headaches from the new system:

Dear Student,

As a result of the passage of the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, we must implement the federal government's Direct Loan Program beginning with summer session 2010. . . . You may have questions or concerns about the changes and what this will mean for you as a borrower. Please review the attached Direct Loan Frequently Asked Questions for some answers to commonly asked questions about Direct Loans.

What does this change mean for you?

We'll give you a hint: more FAFSA-style pain. Here are a few of the highlights:

- You will no longer select a lender or bank for federal student loans as you have in the past; the lender will now be the federal government
- Returning borrowers MUST sign a new Master Promissory Note (MPN) through Direct Loans for each loan type that they wish to borrow
- Parents wishing to borrow a PLUS loan will need to seek credit approval and sign a new Promissory Note for the PLUS loan through the Direct Loan program
- Returning Stafford, PLUS and Grad PLUS borrowers will have loans through the FFEL (Federal Family Education Loan) and Direct Loan programs. This will likely result in different servicers in repayment. Please become familiar with accessing your record in the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) at http://www.nslds.ed.gov prior to entering repayment so that you are aware of where to make your payments.
- Moving to the Direct Loan program changes the timing of when your loan funds are released and when we can provide refunds for those students who use loan funds for living expenses off campus, books, meals, etc. **Unlike in the past, refunds will not be available until about a week after classes begin. Please plan accordingly to arrive on campus with enough money to cover your living expenses until you receive your refund** [emphasis in the original].

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Like we said, what could possibly go wrong? Cash flow problems for students, paperwork nightmares for parents—all in a day's work for the Obama Democrats. The upside: The pain will be felt most acutely this August and September, and with any luck will persist until the Education Department's new clients can do something about it in November. ♦

Mattisisms

The Scrapbook applauds President Obama and Defense Secretary Robert Gates for the selection of Marine General James Mattis to head Central Command. Victor Davis Hanson writes that "Mattis is a proven battlefield commander, a sophisticated student of history, and unshakable in his nerve and purpose." Hanson adds, "We now have, with General Petraeus as ground commander, our two most gifted senior combat generals in charge of Afghanistan, who have worked well together and who were brilliant in Iraq in its darkest hours. I think all this is somewhat analogous to the final rise of Grant and Sherman in spring 1864 . . . or Ridgway in the last days of 1950, or the arrival of Abrams in Vietnam in latter 1968 . . . and increases our chances for success."

Gen. James Mattis

Mattis is extraordinarily well-read and well-spoken, but he's also willing to be direct and blunt on occasion. The Scrapbook has enjoyed some of the Mattisisms that have been circulating since the announcement of his pick, and thought you would too:

■ Speaking to tribal leaders in Iraq: "I come in peace. I didn't bring artillery. But I'm pleading with you, with tears in my eyes: If you f— with me, I'll kill you all."

■ Convincing an Iraqi that the United States wouldn't cut and run: "I said I am never going to leave. I told him I had found a little piece of property down on the Euphrates River and I was going to have a retirement home built there. I did that because I wanted to disabuse him of any sense that he could wait me out."

■ Advice to soldiers and Marines: "Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet." Also: "If I were to sum up what I've learned in 35 years of service, it's improvise, improvise, improvise." And: "You are part of the world's most feared and trusted force. Engage your brain before you engage your weapon." Similarly: "An untrained or uneducated Marine . . . deployed to the combat zone is a bigger threat to mission accomplishment . . . than the enemy."

■ Psychological counseling: "The first time you blow someone away is not an insignificant event."

And last but not least: "Marines don't know how to spell the word defeat." ♦

Enlightening

Barack Obama is fond of the Nobel Prize winner in his cabinet, Energy Secretary Steven Chu—never missing an opportunity to salute his fellow Nobelist—but The Scrapbook has always preferred Chu's (we dare say) savvier and more competent predecessor,

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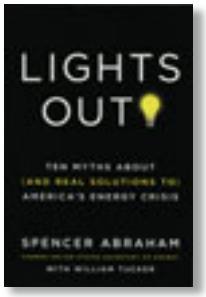
Spencer Abraham. Abraham served in that august position during the first term of George W. Bush—and was, the jacket of his new book informs us, "America's longest-serving secretary of energy." Who knew?

In any case, just in time for congressional debate over energy legislation, Abraham has produced a useful and readable (and affordable!) book on energy policy that THE SCRAPBOOK is pleased to recommend: *Lights Out: Ten Myths about (and Real Solutions to) America's Energy Crisis*. Abraham, writing with William Tucker, lays out clearly and accessibly how to think—and how not to think—about all the issues surrounding energy policy. Jacques Nasser, the former head of Ford Motor Company, says the book is "an interesting mix of folksy storytelling, technical analysis, and political intrigue."



THE SCRAPBOOK sped through it in one evening, in a well-lit room, TV on in the background, air conditioner going full tilt, popcorn popper popping—and felt better about our energy future. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'*Morning Miracle* is a love story, a tale of passion starring a faded beauty trying desperately to hang on in a rapidly changing world. The object of author Dave Kindred's ardor is old-school newspaper journalism, deeply reported public affairs coverage, the kind that can make a difference in people's lives. 'I love the smell of newsprint in the morning, and my favorite time of day is thirty minutes to deadline,' writes Kindred, who has spent more than five decades in the business. In particular, Kindred loves the journalism at the *Washington Post*, where . . . "(Rem Rieder, *Washington Post*, July 6). ♦

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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A Happy Problem

I am about to publish a new book—egads, my twenty-first, which surely qualifies me as a graphomaniac—and the other day 25 so-called author's copies arrived. The thrill of holding the artifact, the physical object that is the palpable result of one's lucubrations, in one's hand is still there. So is the slight nervousness entailed in opening it up, and glimpsing the thousands of sentences one has indited. Some of these sentences give genuine pleasure; others one would like to have the chance to rework, ever so slightly but crucially. But, as the old song has it, it's too late, baby, now, it's too late. These 25 books are called "finished copies" for a reason.

Now comes the problem—a happy problem, I admit—of to whom to send these copies and how to sign them. Receiving a signed copy of a book from the author who wrote it is not an altogether unmixed blessing. The late Arnaldo Momigliano, in his day the greatest living historian of the ancient world, once said to me, as we were passing a bookstore on 57th Street in Chicago: "You know, my dear Epstein, the cheapest way to acquire a book is to buy it." I pondered these words for a bit before I came to realize that what Arnaldo meant is that if you buy a book at least you don't have to read the damn thing. But if you are given one as a gift, especially by the book's author, you are under the obligation not only of reading it but having to respond, preferably in a complimentary way, by letter or by telephone. In sending these books out, then, I am putting their recipients under a heavy obligation.

I have had books sent to me by authors on subjects of the most distant interest to me, some thick enough to qualify as tomes. I generally scribble a note of thanks, adding how much I look forward to reading the book, but neglecting to add that I shall continue to look forward to reading it, well into eternity in fact, since I certainly have no intention of actually reading it while still alive. Contrary to the old maxim, there are some gift horses that need to be looked directly in the mouth.

I am not sure why, but many people feel that there is a certain magic in a book signed by the author. I have myself signed too many books for any thought of magic in the act to linger. Other people feel that a signed copy of a book is one day going to be worth lots of money. I, on the contrary, sometimes warn people who ask for my signature on one of my books that once I sign it they can never return it to the store at which they bought it.

CHRIS GASH

People who see my signed books in the future—if these books are, hope against hope, to have a moderately lengthy future—will no doubt think that many of the signatures are forgeries. This is because my handwriting, as I grow older, is no longer consistent. I have bad handwriting days—the equivalent of bad hair days—when I am not in good control of my script. Some days my handwriting is strong and clear; other days shaky and blurred to the extent that I barely recognize it as my own.

While flogging my books in book stores, I generally ask book buyers how they would like me to sign the copies of my books. Some responses are amusing. I once wrote a book of stories called *Fabulous Small Jews*, and at a bookstore a woman, who bought a copy for her husband, asked that I sign the book, "To Jim, An ordinary large Italian." Then there is the baffling complexity of contemporary spelling. "Would you please sign the book to Judy and Edwin—that's J-u-d-e-y-e and O-e-d-w-e-n."

I suppose the desire for a book signed by its author is a species of autograph collecting, a passion for which I have little understanding and less sympathy. But the passion doesn't require my approval, so long has it been in force and so intense has it become. Not merely autographs but anything to do with the famous brings down astonishing prices at auction. Imagine what one could get for even one of Shakespeare's socks or Virginia Woolf's aspirin tin or Jacqueline Kennedy's blindfold! Are we talking seven figures here, or eight?

These grumblings, the musings of an ungrateful scribbler, already have more than a whiff of being slightly out of date. I earlier mentioned the fond but less than confident hope that my books may have a long life in print. But the larger question begins to look like whether we shall have books at all. If not, please don't ask me to sign your Kindle.

Joseph Epstein

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Westinghouse nuclear power plants release zero greenhouse gases while producing electricity.

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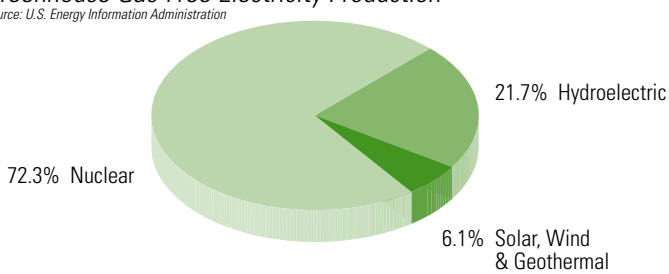

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the weekly Standard

'The Crisis at Which We Are Arrived'

After an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting federal government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

—*Alexander Hamilton,* Federalist *1*

We are not now quite at a founding moment, or even a re-founding moment. But we have arrived at a genuine crisis, or a set of crises, and we may well be at a decisive moment for the country.

This sense of crisis is what animates the Tea Parties. I had the pleasure of attending the "Proud to be an American July 4th Tea Party" outside Independence Hall in Philadelphia. It featured patriotic songs and speeches, and expressions of support for our troops and praise for our country. Yet the mood of patriotic gratitude was mixed with expressions of alarm from my fellow Tea Partiers about the administration now in charge of our government. The combination of patriotic gratitude and urgent alarm produces a determination to act and a willingness to deal boldly with the crises in the economy, in foreign policy, and in self-government that the country faces.

In this respect, the Tea Parties are ahead of the two major parties. As established political parties are wont to do, both remain constricted in their views, attached to business as usual, and invested in established modes and orders—too much so to easily come to grips with a moment like the present.

Of course, the leaders of the Democratic party don't want to come to grips with the present moment. Committed to stale progressive policies, they're doing their very best to push more of them through, even as the failure of those policies becomes ever more evident. Serious reflection on the failure of their favored policies, both at home and abroad, would be too painful. It would require a rethinking too consequential and too disruptive to be willingly undertaken. After all, experience has shown that liberals are more disposed to have the rest of us suffer, than to right themselves by rethinking the dogmas by which they are enthralled.

But it's increasingly clear that "the inefficacy of the subsisting federal government," in our case welfare state liberalism, is no longer sufferable. Out-of-control spending and debt really do threaten our economic future. Weakness and timidity abroad really do threaten a world in which terrorists and fanatics possess, and use, nuclear weapons. The nanny state, at once all-intrusive and all thumbs, really does threaten the future of self-government. The dogmas of multiculturalism really do threaten the strength of a free society.

I was telling a friend about the Philly Tea Party, noting a few eccentric proposals from some of its participants. He commented, "Well, that's better than talking points." He's right. At this moment, bold and seemingly impolitic or impractical ideas are more useful than the diligent repetition of mostly sensible short-term critiques and proposals. At a moment like this, talking points are not enough.

That's the challenge for the Republican party. It is of course a real, existing political party, with real existing responsibilities. So it has to do the day-to-day work of a loyal opposition—helping Generals Petraeus, Mattis, and Odierno to win the wars we're fighting and which we certainly can't afford to lose, resisting foolish Obama administration programs and appointments, proposing legislation and amendments that would improve public policy or at least highlight the difference between the two parties.

But the GOP can be the party of the future as well as the present. It can be the party of fundamental reflection and radical choice as well as the party of day-to-day criticism and opposition. This isn't easy. It can lead to mistakes and missteps, tensions and confusions. But it's what the moment requires.

So fear not the Tea Parties. Be open to fundamental reforms. Belt-tightening and program-trimming, more transparency and greater efficiency, are not enough. The danger for Republicans isn't that they will address the current crisis too boldly. It's that they won't be bold enough.

—*William Kristol*

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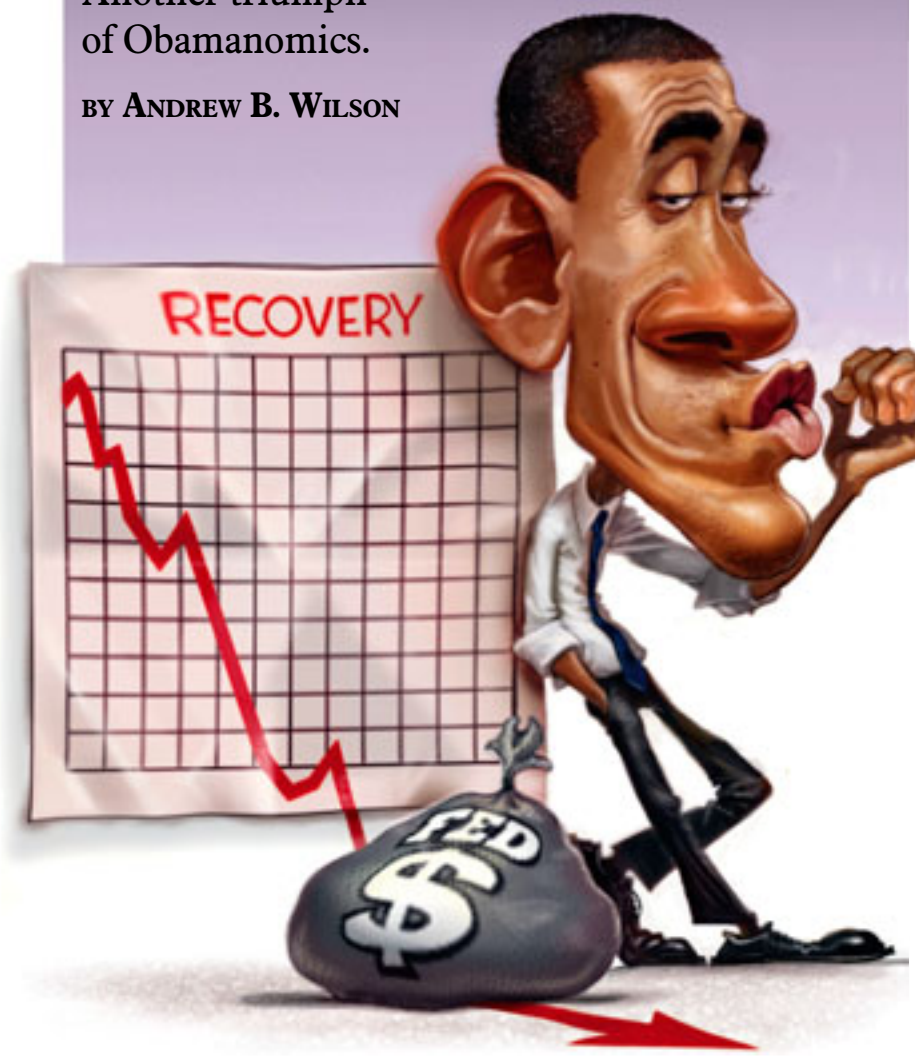
One Job Forward, Two Jobs Back

Another triumph of Obamanomics.

BY ANDREW B. WILSON



GARY LOCKE

The Great Obamanomic Job Creation Machine rumbled into action again over the Fourth of July weekend, promising to spend as much as $2 billion to support creation of 1,585 "permanent" jobs by two solar energy companies. That comes to a potential cost of over $1.25 million per job.

Andrew B. Wilson is a writer and business consultant.

In his weekly radio address on July 3, President Obama chided the Republicans for failing to climb aboard his job-creation bandwagon, which he claims—against strong evidence to the contrary—has created or saved 2.8 million jobs over the past year. And he isn't finished. He vowed "to keep competing aggressively to make sure the jobs and industries of the future are taking root right here in America." Here's what he said:

> We're accelerating the transition to a clean energy economy and doubling our use of renewable sources like wind and solar power—steps that have the potential to create whole new industries and hundreds of thousands of new jobs in America.
>
> In fact, today, I'm announcing that the Department of Energy is awarding nearly $2 billion in conditional commitments to two solar companies.
>
> The first is Abengoa Solar, a company that has agreed to build one of the largest solar plants in the world right here in the United States. After years of watching companies build things and create jobs overseas, it's good news that we've attracted a company to our shores to build a plant and create jobs right here in America. In the short term, construction will create 1,600 jobs in Arizona. What's more, over 70 percent of the components and products used in construction will be manufactured in the USA, boosting jobs and communities in states up and down the supply chain. . . .
>
> The second company is Abound Solar Manufacturing, which will manufacture advanced solar panels at two new plants, creating more than 2,000 construction jobs and 1,500 permanent jobs. . . .
>
> These are just two of the many clean energy investments in the Recovery Act. Already, I've seen the payoff from these investments. I've seen the once-shuttered factories humming with new workers who are building solar panels and wind turbines, rolling up their sleeves to help America win the race for a clean energy economy.

It's all *I, I, I* with this president. The repeated use of the first person singular pronoun illustrates what the economist Friedrich Hayek called "fatal conceit" or "the pretense of knowledge." If no one in the private sector is beating a path to the door of either one of these small and unheralded companies—to buy their products or invest in their technologies—what makes Obama and the Department of Energy so sure it's wise to put *$2 billion* of the taxpayers' money at risk on their behalf? And if President Obama has gone on a VIP

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tour of one or two solar panel or wind turbine factories, does that constitute real knowledge—or simply "the pretense of knowledge"?

And there are other aspects of this presidential pronouncement that deserve closer inspection.

First is the willingness to commit huge sums of money for the creation of comparatively few jobs in favored industries. Abound Solar is supposed to create 1,500 "permanent" jobs, while Abengoa Solar is promising just 85 "permanent" jobs, according to the Department of Energy fact sheet, at its plant in Arizona. Add another 3,600 construction jobs, which will disappear after the three plants are built, and the cost per job created still amounts to $386,000—which is more than seven times the median household income in this country.

Second is the willingness to bet taxpayers' money on unproven companies set up for the express purpose of pursuing government grants. As it admits in one of its press releases, Abound Solar is already "fueled in part by enhanced federal support, including tax credits and loan guarantees, for renewable energy."

Third is Obama's decision to look to nearly bankrupt Spain for the clean energy jobs of the future. Abengoa Solar, beneficiary of fully $1.45 billion of the "conditional commitment" announced by the president, is based in Seville. Though part of a larger Spanish conglomerate with $6 billion in revenues and 23,000 employees, Abengoa Solar itself had fewer than 400 employees at the end of 2009 and annual revenues of less than $150 million. In the annual report on its website, Abengoa Solar lists the total capacity of its solar plants in operation and under construction around the globe at 493 megawatts. To put that into perspective, 493 megawatts is just 0.03 percent of the electrical generating capacity of Cleveland Public Power, which supplies one medium-sized Midwestern city. It's more than enough to fry an egg, but not nearly enough to begin to create "transformational change."

The Department of Energy's commitment to the two companies comes in the form of loan guarantees rather than outright grants. The guarantees put them ahead of other private companies in the borrowing and investment queue—including companies that could be the next Apple or Microsoft. And they put public money at risk in the service of people who are out for private gain. The risk is real.

Russell Kanjorski, the vice president for marketing at Abound Solar, was one of the principals in another solar energy company in northeast Pennsylvania, called Cornerstone Technologies LLC, which attracted $9 million in federal grants before it halted operations in 2003 and later filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. As reported by the Wilkes-Barre *Times Leader*, "Cornerstone reported $14,100 in assets compared with $1.34 million in debt" in its bankruptcy filing. The $9 million in federal grants to Cornerstone were earmarked by Kanjorski's uncle, Representative Paul Kanjorski of Pennsylvania, chairman of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance and Government Sponsored Enterprises.

Is there anything wrong with spending large amounts of public money on 'green' jobs that may or may not pay off in the long run? As a matter of fact, there is.

It is also worth noting that Nobel Laureate and former vice president Al Gore, who has accumulated a substantial fortune in the course of campaigning against global warming while investing in alternative energy and lecturing on the subject, has lent his name and support to Abengoa Solar and the parent company, Abengoa. The Spanish company's stock jumped in November 2007 when an investment fund headed by Gore announced it was acquiring a stake in the company. (Abengoa also owns a biofuels business that is aligned in various ventures with BP, "the world's first green petroleum company," as it used to boast.)

Is there anything wrong with spending large amounts of public money on "green" jobs that may or may not pay off in the long run? As a matter of fact, there is. As one prominent government economist who has studied alternative energy explains, "The opportunity cost of creating these jobs is important. If the government takes a million dollars to create one job, that's a million dollars that could have gone to more efficient and productive use in the private sector—in creating stronger and better jobs for more people."

The same point may be made about everything the government does with the purported goal of boosting the economy and creating jobs. In making the case last year for the $787 billion stimulus bill, Obama and the Democrats claimed it would stop unemployment from going above 8 percent. Instead unemployment climbed to 10 percent and has remained at or near that level ever since. Rather than admit error, the administration is now claiming that the stimulus has kept unemployment from going up to about 12 percent.

But the stimulus hasn't worked. The principal effect of an alarming rise in government spending and deficits has been to undermine a normal cyclical recovery. Part of the blame for continued high unemployment (especially long-term unemployment) surely rests on the crazy growth of new entitlements and federal spending, combined with the likelihood of a raft of new taxes—some hidden (e.g., rising health premiums resulting from Obamacare) and some not (e.g., the value-added tax now being discussed)—to pay for more government and government-directed redistribution of income.

Give the Obama administration credit, then, for destroying or impeding the creation of at least two or three jobs for every one that it claims to have created or saved—including those at Abengoa Solar and Abound Solar Manufacturing. ♦

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Spy Swap

The latest in a long line.

BY JOHN EARL HAYNES & HARVEY KLEHR

With the just completed exchange of spies between the United States and Russia, the media storm will undoubtedly soon disappear. Amid all the accounts of such arcana as steganography, brush passes, and dead drops, the fascination with Internet photos of a naked and sexy Anna Chapman, and tales of families of spies tending to their hydrangeas in the suburbs, there has been little attention to how similar trades occurred in the past.

Like many such trades in the past, this exchange is asymmetrical. The United States has sent ten Russian spies, nine of whom are professional officers of the SVR, Russia's foreign intelligence agency, the other, a naturalized American citizen from Peru, to Russia. The Russians have not freed any Americans, and certainly no professional CIA officers, in exchange. Instead, Russia released four Russians. While they all signed confessions to secure their releases, it is not clear that any of them actually spied for the United States. Igor V. Sutyagin, imprisoned as an American spy, has always denied the charge, and human rights groups have insisted that his conviction was deeply flawed and an effort to intimidate Russian scientists and limit even benign contacts with the West. One of the four was sentenced for spying for Britain, not the United States. The other two were imprisoned for spying for the United States, but the truth of those charges remains unknown, although it is possible that these latter three were important enough spies that the United States was willing to accept the unbalanced swap of ten for four.

John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr are co-authors, with Alexander Vassiliev, of Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America *(Yale University Press).*

One of the few "one of theirs for one of ours" trades was the 1962 exchange of KGB officer Rudolf Abel, caught and imprisoned after operating under a false identity in the United States, for American pilot Francis Gary Powers, whose U-2 spy plane had been shot down over the Soviet Union. The British have occasionally swapped Russian illegals for British citizens, and there have been a handful of similar exchanges that involved spies from several countries.

Other American-Soviet exchanges were even more unbalanced than the current one. In May 1941, the FBI arrested Gayk Ovakimyan, an engineer working for the Soviet trading company Amtorg, as a Soviet spy, based on information from a KGB defector in Canada. Known as "the wily Armenian," Ovakimyan was, in fact, chief of the KGB station in the United States. He claimed diplomatic immunity, but since Amtorg's employees lacked official diplomatic status, he faced a lengthy prison term. The issue was resolved when Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June. America supported Moscow's war effort and offered to release Ovakimyan as part of a trade.

There were no real American spies in Soviet prisons in 1941 (America didn't even have a foreign intelligence service at the time!), although there were thousands of Soviets imprisoned in the Gulag on false charges of working for the United States, Britain, and France. But the USSR did not even offer people falsely accused of being spies. Instead, the State Department asked that the Russian wives of a number of American journalists, long denied exit visas, be allowed to leave the USSR. In order to get Ovakimyan back the Soviets agreed to allow a few of the women to join their husbands in the United States. (Thoughtfully, the KGB then recruited several as spies and they carried out minor tasks for Soviet intelligence after they reached the United States.) Fortunately for Ovakimyan, his arrest by the FBI convinced Soviet authorities that he was not a Trotskyist traitor. He had been slated for recall and execution, but upon his return was promoted to general.

Just as skewed was the 1986 exchange of Soviet spies Karl and Hana Koecher for Anatoly Shcharansky (now known as Natan Sharansky, a prominent Israeli politician). The Koechers were real spies, professional officers of the Communist Czechoslovak intelligence service operating under KGB direction. Posing as dissidents and refugees from Communist oppression they gained American citizenship. Karl Koecher then managed to penetrate the CIA, winning a position as translator/analyst that he used to provide the KGB with highly valuable information. Hana, a stunning blonde, made Anna Chapman's suggestive photos look like child's play; she later boasted she had sex with numerous CIA and Pentagon employees, journalists, and one senator. The Koechers were members of the "Capitol Couples," a club of swingers who met each weekend for group sex. Sharansky, for whom they were exchanged, had been arrested in 1977 on charges of spying for the United States and treason and sentenced to 13 years of forced labor in Siberia. He was no spy at all but a courageous Jewish dissident and a painful thorn in the side of the Soviet establishment.

Just because most prior spy swaps have been asymmetrical does not mean they were without benefit to the United States. While punishing spies who have violated the laws of the United States, and deterring others who might contemplate imitating them, is important, other issues are at play. In 1941, the shift in the diplomatic relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union after the German attack made the Ovakimyan case a distraction that the State Department wanted put aside. And the trade for the wives allowed it to resolve a humanitarian issue that the Soviets

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had stonewalled for years. The 1986 exchange allowed the United States to avoid what was shaping up as a difficult prosecution of the Koechers due to several legal procedural missteps, while freeing Sharansky from the Gulag was a significant propaganda blow against a Soviet system then spiraling toward dissolution.

This latest exchange also offers some advantages to the United States. One is avoiding a court contest. The American criminal justice system has never meshed well with foreign espionage cases. It allows defense lawyers to demand all sorts of information under discovery motions. Such demands once threatened to reveal in open court highly secret and sensitive information about American counter-intelligence operations, over which hostile espionage agencies drooled.

The lawyer for accused Soviet spy Judith Coplon in 1949 demanded that the material she had stolen from the Justice Department, and which had been found in her possession when she was arrested in the act of handing it over to a Soviet diplomat, be entered as public evidence for the world to see. The FBI was outraged that the documents it had stopped Coplon from delivering to a Soviet diplomat would be handed to the Soviets via an American court. Federal prosecutors asked Judge Albert Reeves to refuse the motion. Reeves replied that as a federal judge, "I am not charged with the responsibility of protecting the security of the government" and ordered the documents made public.

This "graymail" effectively prevented prosecution of a number of foreign spies. American security agencies (FBI, CIA, NSA) would rather forgo prosecution of a spy than reveal such secrets to America's enemies, contenting themselves with identifying the spy and putting an end to his or her espionage with deportation or some other method of neutralization. In a belated response in 1980 Congress passed the Classified Information Procedures Act (CIPA). It provided that government prosecutors could request a judicial review of classified information demanded by a defense attorney. The judge would then rule on what classified information necessarily had to be disclosed in order for the defendant to present an adequate defense, with an option of substituting unclassified summaries for the sensitive materials. CIPA called upon judges to balance the need of the government to protect intelligence information and the right of a defendant to a fair trial. It reduced but did not eliminate the "graymail" problem in espionage and terrorism cases because judges retained a large element of discretion.

Talk about Red: Anna Chapman

NEWSCOM

In the current case there is likely one item of information that the FBI very much wants to keep secret and that Russian intelligence very much wants to learn. From the criminal complaints released by the FBI it is clear that the bureau has had all of these spies under surveillance for years, some for nearly a decade. How did American security get onto them? Did the NSA intercept and decode the covert radio transmissions some of the Russian agents used? Was there some error in the false documents that the Russians used when entering the United States that put the FBI on the trail? Did "legal" Russian agents from the consulate and embassy who met covertly with these "illegals" make some kind of tradecraft error? And, most important, does the CIA have a source inside Russian intelligence?

Russian intelligence desperately wants to know the answers to these questions, and American counterintelligence most emphatically doesn't want to tell them. Defense lawyers might have attempted to use discovery motions to force disclosure of information that would help the Russians to answer these questions in hopes that the Justice Department would rather drop the prosecutions than produce the information. This swap removes that risk. Russian intelligence is left in the dark as to what went wrong with what was by all odds a major operation to which it devoted an impressive amount of resources.

The SVR will get no clues about what American counterintelligence has learned or how it did so and will likely have to undergo a time-consuming, divisive, and painful internal review to try and pinpoint what went wrong. And while the Russian spies will not go to prison, their careers as field intelligence operatives are over. They may never again be fully trusted in Russia. Anna Chapman may yet parlay this episode into a new career, but for most of her compatriots, the game is over. ♦

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Counting al Qaeda

Leon Panetta's numbers aren't to be trusted.

BY DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS & BILL ROGGIO

When CIA director Leon Panetta declared on a Sunday talk show in late June that "we're looking at maybe 50 to 100" al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan, "maybe less," some commentators took this as a political turning point. British journalist and author Stephen Grey commented via his Twitter account, for example, that the statement "could change the whole war debate."

No doubt the 50 to 100 figure will be repeated by officials and pundits for some time to come; given the paucity of available information, it will factor heavily in debates over America's strategic interests in Afghanistan. This is unfortunate, as every available indicator suggests that Panetta's figure is unreliable. Worse, it may be evidence of a lack of rigor within the U.S. intelligence community.

Data points gleaned from coalition operations seem to undercut Panetta's claim. Consider the case of Kunar Province.

The same day that Panetta said there were only 50 to 100 al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan, the U.S. military announced an operation in Kunar targeting "al Qaeda and Taliban leadership in the area." While the names of targeted al Qaeda leaders were not disclosed, two major known al Qaeda leaders in Kunar are Abu Ikhlas al Masri, al Qaeda's operations chief for Kunar, and Qari Zia Rahman, who is considered the top regional commander in Kunar and Nuristan.

A report published last year by the Institute for the Study of War provides more detailed information about the insurgency in Kunar. It notes a 2008 estimate by provincial officials, which coincides with information provided to us by an American intelligence source, that there were "at least 2,000 insurgents in the mountains of Kunar." Though the number fluctuates as insurgents crisscross the border with Pakistan, it is significant that about half of these fighters were "believed to be foreigners, including Pakistanis, Arabs, Chechens, and Uzbeks." Most foreign fighters are assessed to be loyal to al Qaeda.

The number of insurgents in Kunar has probably risen since 2008. More fighters are reported to have moved there since the United States began abandoning its Kunar outposts last fall. Even if 90 percent of the foreign fighters in Kunar belong to the Pakistani Taliban and only the remaining 10 percent are Arabs, Uzbeks, Chechens, and so on, that would suggest that Kunar alone has a significant al Qaeda problem—with about as many al Qaeda-affiliated fighters as Panetta estimated for the entire country.

But the number of al Qaeda fighters is almost certainly higher still. One American intelligence officer who recently returned from Afghanistan told us: "About half of the insurgents in Kunar are foreign fighters, and given that most of the foreign fighters are loyal to al Qaeda, that would easily put the group's numbers at approximately 1,000 in Kunar alone." The military's intelligence agencies do not concur with the figures Panetta cited.

Another difficulty in measuring al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan is defining "al Qaeda." The distinctions between many militant leaders or groups and al Qaeda have broken down over time. Qari Zia Rahman, for example, straddles al Qaeda and the Taliban. Hakimullah Mehsud's Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan is closely allied with al Qaeda; it sponsored the failed Times Square bombing and aided an al Qaeda operative in the suicide attack that killed seven CIA officials in Khost province. And Sirajuddin Haqqani, head of a powerful network in Pakistan, is believed by some intelligence officials to be a member of al Qaeda's *shura majlis*, or leadership council.

It is possible that the unreliable estimates of al Qaeda numbers are politically motivated—designed either to demonstrate progress or to hasten U.S. disengagement from Afghanistan. Another possibility, and perhaps cause for greater concern, is that they reflect poor analytical methods.

It is unclear what methodology CIA analysts used to arrive at the 50-100 figure. (This opacity can work to the advantage of anyone trumpeting the figure, as those without the proper security clearances cannot get a sense of how the sausage is made.) One strong possibility, however, is that the analysts ran through recent intelligence and embraced the fixed numbers they came across without subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny.

The analyst we spoke with about Kunar noted that forming an estimate for even a single province requires specific, in-depth knowledge of that place. It would take detailed data for "every province in Afghanistan to derive a real approximation of the enemy" in the country as a whole. That would require a great deal of research, effort, and analysis—which Panetta's estimate seems to lack.

Of course, unreliable estimates do not start and stop with Leon Panetta. Rahm Emanuel claimed in late June that about "a half of al Qaeda has been eliminated in this last 18 months." Similarly, George W. Bush claimed in 2004 that three-quarters of al Qaeda had been killed or captured. Such declarations can only confuse the public debate—or produce confused policy that ultimately costs lives. ♦

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is the director of the Center for the Study of Terrorist Radicalization at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) and coeditor of The Afghanistan-Pakistan Theater: Militant Islam, Security, and Stability *(FDD Press, 2010). Bill Roggio is the editor of* The Long War Journal *and a senior fellow at FDD.*

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Think Big

Republicans should embrace Paul Ryan's Road Map. BY FRED BARNES

For Republicans, the Road Map authored by congressman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin is the most important proposal in domestic policy since Ronald Reagan embraced supply side economics in the 1980 presidential campaign. It's not only the freshest, boldest, and most comprehensive Republican thinking, it's also the most relevant. If Republicans adopt the Road Map as their basic ideological blueprint, it offers them the prospect of a landslide in the midterm election this year, followed by victory in the presidential election in 2012.

For sure, that's a lot of weight for a policy statement drafted by a 40-year-old House member to bear. But the Road Map is perfectly timed to deal with the crises of the moment: economic stagnation, uncontrolled spending, the deficit and long-term debt, soaring tax rates, health care, the housing problem, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid.

Yet Republican leaders are wary of endorsing it, and for understandable reasons. The Road Map is sweeping and politically risky. It would overhaul popular programs like Medicare, relying on individuals to make decisions now made by government. Democrats are already attacking it. When Ryan delivered the weekly Republican radio address in late June, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi put out a press release under the heading, "Republicans Make Key Advocate of Privatizing Social Security and Ending Medicare Their Spokesman on Budget."

Democrats insist focus groups have rejected Ryan's reform of Medicare. When swing voters learn Medicare would become "a voucher system . . . it has a massive impact," Democratic strategist Robert Creamer wrote in the *Huffington Post*. "People like the Democratic program of Medicare."

Republican leaders fear the Road Map might jeopardize, or at least minimize, what is expected to be a decisive Republican victory in the November midterm election. Their advantage in the congressional generic poll is at an all-time high, and President Obama's approval rating has dropped to the mid-40s. Given these usually reliable indicators, why give Democrats a target to shoot at?

There are three reasons Republicans should ignore their jitters about the Road Map. The first is that the nation's disenchantment with Obama and Democrats will take Republicans only so far. There's a residue of bad feelings toward Republicans from the years the party ruled Congress, spent too much, and produced scandals.

Voters have memories. To overcome their qualms, Republicans need to provide more than a litany of Democratic faults. Voters are frightened about the future of the country. They're looking for a serious solution to the mess we're in. The Road Map offers exactly that, plus the opportunity to win more seats than Republicans are likely to capture solely by zinging Democrats.

The second reason should be obvious after the ignominious Republican defeat in May in the race for John Murtha's old House seat in Pennsylvania. Democrat Mark Critz won by running to the right—against Washington, Obama, spending, the deficit—and Democratic candidates across the country are taking the same tack.

Republican candidates need to put some daylight between themselves and their Democratic opponents. The Road Map will do that. Democrats can't endorse it for fear of alienating their liberal base, which loathes anything that reduces the size of government. The Road Map stamps Republican candidates as the real conservatives, which is what voters happen to be looking for in 2010.

The third reason is the Republican message (or the absence of one). In Pennsylvania, it was "send a message to Nancy Pelosi." Voters declined. I like the Republican slogan that worked so well in 1946—"Had enough?" But a slogan is not a message. The Road Map is a message. The country is falling apart, we're going broke, government is on a takeover binge, the economy is wobbling. The Road Map is the solution. That's a pretty good message.

Those who tremble at the thought of pushing a big idea should remember the campaign of 1980. Reagan, who for years had warned of the evils of government spending and overreach, suddenly became the champion of an across the board, 30 percent cut in tax rates for individuals and business.

That was very risky. The elder George Bush called it "voodoo economics." Democrats were certain the whopping tax cut would turn the country against Reagan. Quite the opposite occurred. Reagan would have defeated Jimmy Carter without it, but not by the 10 percentage points he actually won by. The tax cut showed Reagan was serious about reviving the economy and not at all a weakling like Carter.

In 1994, the Contract With America wasn't as risky. It wasn't a big idea either, but a collection of smaller ones. Democrats, however, believed it would doom Republican chances of a substantial victory. It didn't. It can't be proved, but I think the Contract enlarged the Republican landslide.

For now, the Road Map has a relatively small but growing cheering section. A dozen House members have endorsed it. Senator Jim DeMint praised it in his book *Saving Freedom*. Jeb Bush likes it. On CNN last week, economic historian Niall Ferguson called Ryan "a serious thinker on the Republican right who's prepared to grapple with these issues of fiscal sustainability and come up with a plan."

Ferguson sees the Road Map as

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"radical fiscal reform," which it is, and said Washington should recognize it as the alternative to "the Keynesian option," which Washington doesn't. "I'm depressed how few people in Washington are prepared to talk about" the Road Map option, he said.

Ryan isn't depressed. "As soon as people become informed and know the details, the more they like it," he told me. He says the Road Map is "based on a fundamentally different vision" from the "government-centered ideology now prevailing in Washington . . . and restores an American character rooted in individual initiative, entrepreneurship, and opportunity."

The full plan—"A Road Map for America's Future"—is outlined in a formidable, 87-page document. It would give everyone a refundable tax credit to buy health insurance, allow individual investment accounts to be carved out of Social Security, reduce the six income tax rates to two (10 and 25 percent), and replace the corporate tax (35 percent) with a business consumption tax (8.5 percent). And that's not the half of it.

As ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee, Ryan was able to get the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to run the numbers in his plan. CBO concluded the plan would "make the Social Security and Medicare programs permanently solvent [and] lift the growing debt burden on future generations, and hold federal taxes to no higher than 19 percent of GDP." Pretty impressive results, I'd say.

The Road Map does one more thing. It would give Republicans an agenda if they gain control of the House or Senate in the midterm election—or a mandate if they win both. "What's the point of winning an election if you don't have a mandate?" Ryan asks.

He doesn't expect a mandate in 2010. "I need to make sure these ideas survive this election," he says, and set the stage for "the most ideological, sea-changing election in our lifetime" in 2012. Merely survive in 2010? The Road Map can do better than that. How about thrive? ♦

In the Tank for Big Labor

Obama is making union dreams come true.

BY PEYTON R. MILLER

Labor union membership has declined dramatically in the past six decades, from over a third of the workforce in 1945 to just 7.2 percent of private sector employees in 2009; unions are now overwhelmingly concentrated in the public sector. But organized labor continues to wield tremendous political influence. Unions spent $400 million during the 2008 elections in support of Democratic candidates, and Barack Obama has been grateful.

While the president has failed to enact the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)—the mother of all pro-union legislation which includes the infamous "card check" proposal to effectively eliminate the secret ballot from union elections—he has made it possible for labor leaders to implement EFCA provisions by other means. Through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), for instance. The NLRB conducts union elections and remedies unfair labor practices in most industries; Obama has named two pro-union members to this body—both were radical enough to require recess appointments. Stewart Acuff of the Utility Workers Union of America vowed to the *Huffington Post* that even if EFCA does not pass, labor leaders will work with the president's NLRB appointees "to change the rules governing forming a union through administrative action." The board is now considering use of remote online voting rather than in-person ballots in representation elections, which like card check could expose workers to undue influence from organizers.

An Obama appointee to the National Mediation Board, which coordinates railroad and airline labor-management relations, precipitated a rule change in May to allow approval of union representation by a majority of those voting, rather than a majority of a company's entire workforce as in the past. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce notes that the new rule violates the Railway Labor Act, which was designed to prevent a few disgruntled employees from triggering a strike that could cripple commerce throughout the country.

President Obama has unilaterally aided unions through regulatory initiatives, which, according to Randel Johnson of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, have mirrored the "wish list" presented to the Obama transition team by the AFL-CIO. Obama signed an executive order requiring federal contractors to inform employees of their right to organize under federal labor laws, and revoked an order that they be informed of their right to forgo joining a union or paying certain union dues. Another executive order reflected unions' preference for seniority-based hiring by requiring contractors to offer existing service employees first refusal of positions for which they are qualified under a new contract. Obama has precluded reimbursement of expenses contractors incur to influence employees' decision to form a union, and relaxed union financial disclosure requirements. He strongly encouraged federal agencies to award construction contracts of more than $25 million to companies that either

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employ unionized workers or offer union wages and benefits, which is bound to increase the cost of government construction.

The president's bailouts of General Motors and Chrysler subverted bankruptcy law by giving preferential treatment to the United Auto Workers over the automakers' secured creditors. Bondholders ended up with a smaller stake than the UAW members of both companies, even though they had lent money under the contractual understanding that they would be compensated first in the event of bankruptcy.

Big Labor has also benefited from Obama's legislative agenda. He enacted a 35 percent tariff on Chinese tires at the behest of the United Steelworkers, fulfilled a Teamsters Union priority by canceling a program allowing Mexican trucks to carry cargo on American roads, and required that projects funded by the 2009 stimulus use U.S.-manufactured supplies.

The stimulus bill operates under the Davis-Bacon Act, which requires that employees of public works projects receive the prevailing wage in the area as determined by the Department of Labor. The regulation raises costs by putting a floor under wages for the more than 678,000 public construction jobs to be created by the end of 2010—many of which are in areas where Davis-Bacon has not previously applied. The bill also included a $53.6 billion "State Fiscal Stabilization Fund" to prevent layoffs of heavily unionized public employees.

And labor unions have not been docile since 2008. They funded a multimillion-dollar "grassroots" effort to counteract opposition to Obamacare, whose mandates and subsidies will generate new demand for health services, and thus more dues-paying union members in the health sector. As J. Justin Wilson of the Center for Union Facts points out, the activism was also part of a broader advocacy of a federal beachhead in certain industries, which allows unions to lobby the government for favorable regulations. More directly, the Democratic health care bill included a $10 billion bailout of mismanaged retiree health plans that will benefit numerous former union workers.

Just last month, Obama asked Congress for another $50 billion, on top of what the stimulus already provided, to prevent states from firing employees. While he's stopped campaigning for EFCA, the president may yet have an opportunity to sign it in some form. AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka is determined to see card check attached to an urgent bill while Democrats still have decisive congressional majorities. Democratic leaders have indicated that the lame duck session following the November elections may be the best opportunity.

Even if no other pro-union legislation comes to pass, President Obama has more than paid off big labor's $400 million investment, albeit at the expense of the rest of the country. ♦

Regulatory Burden Could Halt Job Creation

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

It's easy to understand why many Americans are favorably disposed to stronger regulation of several key industries. In the last few years, we have witnessed a near collapse of our financial markets, a major oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and other problems. In keeping with its philosophy of an expanded government role in the economy, the Obama administration and its congressional allies have responded with one of the most aggressive regulatory agendas in memory. But what will be the cumulative impact of all these new rules on the ability of our economy to create jobs for American workers?

No one—including the U.S. Chamber—is arguing that regulations are unnecessary. To the contrary, fair rules are essential for the economy to work properly. But we must strike a careful balance between too little and too much regulation. No matter how sensible, well intentioned, or politically popular a particular rule or mandate appears, we should always ask: What will the impact be on jobs? We fear this consideration is routinely ignored in the halls of our government today.

In recent months, the House passed a climate change bill that would create some 1,200 new programs and mandates at a cost of well over a trillion dollars. The Environmental Protection Agency is moving forward with 30 major economic rules and 172 major policy rules, an unprecedented level of regulatory action. The National Labor Relations Board has targeted 50 prior rulings for reversal.

The soon-to-be-finalized financial regulatory reform legislation creates well over 350 regulatory rulemakings, 47 studies, and 74 reports—dwarfing anything in Sarbanes-Oxley. The 2,800-page health care bill—with its unprecedented and confusing employer mandate and hundreds of billions of dollars in business taxes—will require the drafting of thousands of pages of new regulations to be followed by individuals, businesses, health care industry providers, and the states.

You can find in these numbers a principal reason why businesses are so reluctant to make investments and create jobs. Even proposed regulations can freeze investments as decision makers worry and wonder about what the rules may be. The administration and Congress—with full input from employers—must address this regulatory avalanche with a mix of commonsense rule writing, regulatory restraint, and corrective changes in laws and mandates that have yet to take effect.

If we continue down the path toward a command-and-control, European-style economy with straitjacket regulations, confiscatory tax rates, and unsustainable debt, we will consign our nation to European-style economic stagnation, double-digit unemployment, and troubling social instability. America doesn't want to go there.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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By Matt Labash

This is a story about living the good life. Or not the good life, exactly, in the Italian, *dolce vita* understanding of the term. It's more about living the *better* life, a comparative way of living. It's about living better than I was before, living better than I once thought possible, living better, if you'll forgive my candor, than do you.

Here, I use "you" to loosely mean "conservative" or even "disengaged liberal." For living better than you is all about honesty. Honesty with you. Honesty with myself. So I'll just level with the two of us: I used to be a conservative. I mean, I wasn't some nutcake conservative. I didn't follow along with Glenn Beck at home, flowcharting the lineage of Lenin to Van Jones on my kids' Fisher-Price chalkboard. I didn't attend Rand Paul rallies in a tricorn and a frilly blouse like some kind of colonial crossdresser. I was just a vanilla, middle-of-the-road conservative. As long as I remained undertaxed, overdefended, and unaborted, I was pretty content. Live and let live, I thought. I might have even made a good Libertarian, except I hate science fiction, think Ayn Rand was a crank with an unfortunate haircut, and would fail the house drug test (when my results came back negative).

But my lesser living was a lifetime ago. Actually, just a few weeks ago, but it feels like the distant past. It was before my road to Damascus encounter, before the illuminative flame touched my torch of enlightenment. It was B.J.K.—Before Justin Krebs.

Who is Justin Krebs, you ask? Only my sensei. My guru. The man who made plain that I had politics all wrong. I used to think along the lines of the British writer and publisher Ernest Benn that politics was "the art of looking for

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELWOOD H. SMITH

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trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy." Thus, I had put my politics in my political box, and my life in my living box. When I should've placed all the contents in the same box—a much bigger, biodegradable one. (You can get them at Treecycle.com.)

Krebs showed me that my politics shouldn't be just my politics, but also my religion, my sun and moon, my inhalation and exhalation. Since politics, particularly liberal politics, bring people so much joy, wouldn't I be better off politicizing everything—the way I live and work and play? That's a rhetorical question, by the way. The answer is a resounding "yes," as evidenced right there in the title of Krebs's new book: *538 Ways to Live Work and Play Like a Liberal.*

The 32-year-old Krebs didn't just write this book, which comes complete with a 538-item checklist. He's lived it. He sharpened his liberal-living iron on the mean conservative streets of Highland Park, New Jersey; Cambridge, Massachusetts; and, finally, that repository of red state madness, the island of Manhattan. Girding him for battle were his parents—two good liberals, who sent him to a cooperative preschool, where he called all the other kids' moms and dads by their first names. Krebs says his parents were his "playmates" as well, though all was not idyllic. There are some intimations of child abuse; they took him to a Walter Mondale rally when he was just 6 years old.

Upon graduating from Harvard, Krebs had his liberal ticket punched repeatedly. He served in the office of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. He blogs on the progressive blog OpenLeft. He is one of the founding directors of The Tank, "a non-profit arts presenter in the heart of Manhattan." But his enduring legacy, his gift to all of us really, was hatched over a pitcher of beer.

Seven years ago, like many a good liberal, Krebs and his friends were driven to drink by the "arrogance and authoritarianism of the Bush administration." What started as an informal vinegar session in a Hell's Kitchen dive was formalized into a "Drinking Liberally" club, which met every Thursday, a place for activist types to talk progressive politics, network, plot strategy, and get hooched up (though its organizers remind us, "As you drink liberally, always drink responsibly"). As the club gained more members, it begat chapters nationwide and led to offshoot Eating Liberally clubs for foodies, Screening Liberally clubs for film buffs, Reading Liberally clubs for bookworms, and Laughing Liberally clubs that use "humor and laughter to spread understanding of liberal ideas and advance progressive values." (Sounds like a scream!)

There are now 330 Living Liberally chapters in 50 states and around the globe. It's no longer just a few longhairs knocking back pitchers of cheap suds, bitching about the Patriot Act. Living Liberally has become a way of life. There's even a Liberal Card, a membership card which is "about showing your liberal pride, joining the liberal community and claiming your liberal discounts." It's printed on renewable green "CornCards," rather than the petroleum that is blackening not only the brown pelicans of the Louisiana marshlands, but also our souls.

As Krebs writes, Drinking Liberally "has never been about drinking . . . it's about progressive politics in a social setting." It's about all of us being "in this together." It's not just about "how you vote on Election Day." It's about "how you vote with your wallet every day." It's not just about "what you chant at a rally, but what you laugh at or rock out to on your iPod." It's about saying "it's about" a lot, and then saying something real meaningful afterwards. Like this: "Living like a liberal is never just about making politics personal, but about making personal politics public." It's about alliteration.

I'm just going to be honest again: All this alliteration wet my whistle (see, it's catching). I wanted to find out what it was all about. Krebs's book was due for release on July 4, the day we gained our independence as a country. But I was ready to gain my own independence as an individual—independence from this disengaged, right-leaning, but mostly apolitical way of life I'd been enslaved by. So I secured an early copy.

The 538-item checklist was daunting. As Krebs admits, "Some of the ideas are hard, or even uncomfortable. You don't have to do them all. Just think about them." So I did. For roughly 10 days, I thought about them and undertook a good many of them. There was no way I could tackle them all. But it was clear that if I wanted to gain my independence by Independence Day by biting off a representative sample, I'd still be busier than a one-legged Obama in an ass-kicking contest. Time to get to work.

EATING LIBERALLY

Before I get started, it's honesty-time again. If I'm going to adopt a new conscience, I have to clear my old one. Back when I was a conservative, I did, to my credit, have a few liberal tendencies, all of which are on Krebs's list. I'd listen to NPR in the car, at least for as long as I could stand Ira Glass's nasal voice. I'd read the liberal mainstream media—for fun, not to file bias reports with the Media Research Center. I'd recycle everything: newspapers, plastics, material (Don't believe me? Read my piece from last year on spending a week eliminating my carbon footprint—it's strikingly similar to this one).

But the one very unliberal thing I did was shop at the philistine Safeway grocery store. I didn't look to see if something was shade-grown or grass-fed. I'd just slap it in my cart

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like a careless drunk waving a loaded gun. So much of being a Krebsian liberal boils down to following your mother's advice when, as a child, you'd chew on a plastic toy: "Don't put that in your mouth, you don't know where it's been." As Krebs writes in one of his frequent sidebars concerning conservatism, if you were spending conservatively, "you would never wonder where your purchases come from" and "would be more susceptible to being poisoned, damaged, or fatally injured by your food and children's toys."

If I am to be a good liberal, then, I can no longer be a conservative child, harboring trace amounts of arsenic and ignorance. I have to think harder about what I am putting in my mouth. So no more Safeway for me. Krebs urges joining a food co-op. I check out the Maryland Food Collective, a "not-for-profit, worker-owned and operated organization" providing "quality, organic, seasonal, fair-trade, and healthy food" at affordable prices. I scout them using the Internet, because it's 40 miles away, and I'm trying to drive less and "shrink my hoodprint" (whenever multiple Krebsian commandments are in conflict, I usually err on the side of laziness).

Most of their recipes have off-putting names. Food incongruity dominates the menu: "Famous Nut Burgers," "Peanut Stew," "Rainy Day Chili of Doom." But with a full price list, I set about making my fantasy liberal sandwich with my fantasy liberal fixings: Three Seed Healthy Loaf Bread (90 cents), baba ghanoush (60 cents), four slices of tofurkey (80 cents), hummus (60 cents), bean spread (60 cents), tzatziki (35 cents), three slices of soy cheese (90 cents), and "goddess dressing," which is like Thousand Island to non-Gaia worshippers (25 cents). It comes out to five dollars on the nose, without tax. What corporatist chain would've thought of making fantasy sandwiches with fresh ingredients for a mere five bucks?

But unlike the so-called "sandwich artists" at Subway, with their functional uniforms and plastic gloves, the Maryland Food Collective posts staff photos. Here, workers often use the co-op "as a platform for politics and creative expression." They look it, too. They don't appear overly clean. The creative expressionists aren't wearing gloves. There's lots of facial hair and flannel and piercings. Their staff guide says they have to "wear sleeves that cover their armpits"—not very reassuring. Most look like they're on sandwich-making work release from a prison-hospital's heroin treatment program. I think, sandwiches-wise, I'll go locavore and stick with the nearby Subway.

But I still have to grocery shop. Krebs suggests going with a green-conscious option, like Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, even though the latter is currently being boycotted by some of its liberal base since its CEO did not support Obamacare. That doesn't matter to me, though. Both stores are like Willy Wonka's wonderland of progressive goodness.

At first, I am intimidated, as any rookie would be standing in front of the vast selection of sea salts at Whole Foods. But as I fill my cart, I quickly get my sea-salt legs beneath me by realizing the principle upon which liberal grocery-shopping turns. Liberals don't just need their food to come comestible or tasty or biodynamic or free-range or locally grown. They—rather, we—need it to come with a philosophy and a parable. We need our food to tell a story. Why else would I pay 17 bucks for 32 ounces of McLure's Pure Dark Amber Maple Syrup? Easy. Because it makes me feel better about my purchase to hear the story of how five generations of Granite State McLures have been overcharging for syrup that doesn't taste as good as Aunt Jemima's. In other words, our food should have the same affectations as the people eating it.

SO AS MUCH TIME AS I SPEND FILLING UP MY CART WITH BLUEBERRY MUESLI AND TOMATO-BASIL ARTISAN FOCCACIA AND GLUTEN-FREE ORGANIC RED QUINOA, I SPEND EVEN MORE TIME TAKING NOTES ON THE HISTORIES, CORE VALUES, AND SAMARIAN PROVERBS ON THE LABELS.

So as much time as I spend filling up my cart with blueberry muesli and tomato-basil artisan foccacia and gluten-free organic red quinoa, I spend even more time taking notes on the histories, core values, and Samarian proverbs on the labels, which, like my Tazo Brambleberry Herbal Infusion juice, promise "an enticing source of wonder, inspiration and antioxidants."

By the time I get home with my liberal bounty, I feel more like I've been shopping at Holy Foods. I tried to be mindful of Krebs's admonition to "think of plant-based foods—beans, grains, fruits, veggies, nuts—as your own personal source of solar power." Sounds more like a source of wind power, if you know what I'm saying, but I feel good nonetheless. I feel clean surrounded by my Rosemary & Olive Oil Asiago and my Pomegranate Green Tea. Seeking further validation of the nobleness of my purchases, I follow another of Krebs's directives and check out everything I buy at the Responsible Shopper guide at Greenamericatoday.org. I punch in "Whole Foods," and that's when the horror begins.

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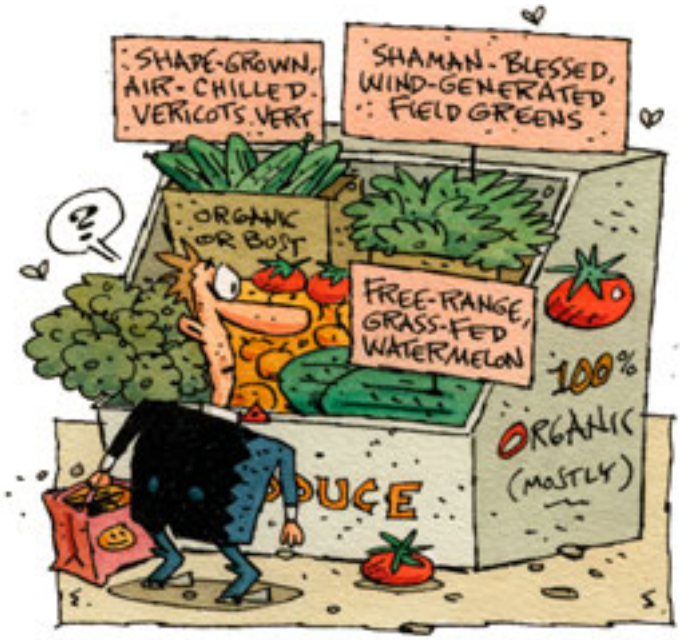
It says that Whole Foods has been less than transparent about the use of genetically modified organisms in store-brand products and has ignored shareholder requests for information on the use of toxic chemicals in products such as baby bottles. (Damn you, Whole Foods, if I'd wanted to poison my baby, I'd have stayed conservative.) Likewise, union organizing at Whole Foods met with opposition from management, "with reports of surveillance and termination of employees who solicit union participation." That seems to be in direct violation of three of the seven core values that I saw posted in their store (delight, happiness, and partnership).

Next up: Trader Joe's. Not good. The Responsible Shopper says a recent investigation by the AFL-CIO affiliated Solidarity Center found the store is "sourcing shrimp from plants in Thailand and Bangladesh where workers as young as 8 years old are subject to sweatshop conditions." I blame myself for this. I had smelled a rat and ignored it.



While in Trader Joe's, I walked past the organic banana stand and noticed a big pile of Chiquita bananas on prominent display. Krebs suggests questioning where your food comes from, labor practices, etc., so I started grilling the stock boy, who quickly referred me to a manager named Sunshine. She was sunshiny, too: all blonde locks and granola smiles. I knew there was something wrong with Chiquita, but flipping through my mental rolodex of corporate atrocities, I just couldn't remember precisely what. So I improvised.

"Say, Sunshine," I said. "You guys stock Chiquita bananas here. Don't they lop off their workers' hands to keep them in line?"

She laughed nervously. "I've heard something like that," she said. "But I really couldn't tell you specifics—though you should check our website if you're curious about labor conditions."

It turns out, as my sources at Wikipedia reveal, that one of the company's subsidiaries actually "carelessly exposed laborers . . . in Costa Rica to highly toxic pesticides on multiple occasions" and has been accused by a human rights group "of using a private militia to intimidate workers."

After reading the news, I am so disillusioned that, again following Krebs's checklist, I put on Ani DiFranco's "Tis of Thee," for an occasion, as Krebs writes, "when the battle seems unwinnable and you need to keep on going regardless." Sample lyric:

> Why don't you just go ahead and turn off the sun
> 'Cuz we'll never live long enough
> To undo everything they've done to you.

It's a real downer.

Looking at Krebs's "Glossary of Gustatory Goodness," I think about becoming a "retrovore." Before my conversion, I used to think a retrovore was just a locavore who wore vintage bowling shirts. But now I know it's one "who forages for food that's fresh, local, minimally processed." Maybe I'll go out and forage for fresh berries. Or maybe, like Trader Joe's shrimpers, I'll just let my 7 year old do it for me.

BUYING LIBERALLY

It's not easy being liberal. Just try buying politically correct beer in a Republican-leaning rural county. As a whiskey man, I never bothered becoming a beer snob. Back when I was still conservative, I had a simple beer-buying process: hop in car, go to convenience store, get 12-pack of Budweiser, go home. Total distance: three miles. Elapsed time: seven minutes.

But following Krebs's injunction to "drink green," I not only have to swear off Budweiser, but I have to avoid a "moral hangover" by calling Bud's maker, Anheuser-Busch, a company which sits on the board of the Chamber of Commerce, "an organization that outspokenly denies global warming." I call an Anheuser "beer specialist" named Stephanie to log my complaint. Following Krebs's script, I inform her that "I love the King of Beers, but I love Mother Earth more—please take a stand against the Chamber."

An awkward silence follows. "Uhhhh . . . okay," says Stephanie, forcing customer-relations cheer. "There's not really much we can do, but I'll forward your comments and make your voice heard!" That's all I can ask of Stephanie. Sure, my little call doesn't mean much. But imagine if 500

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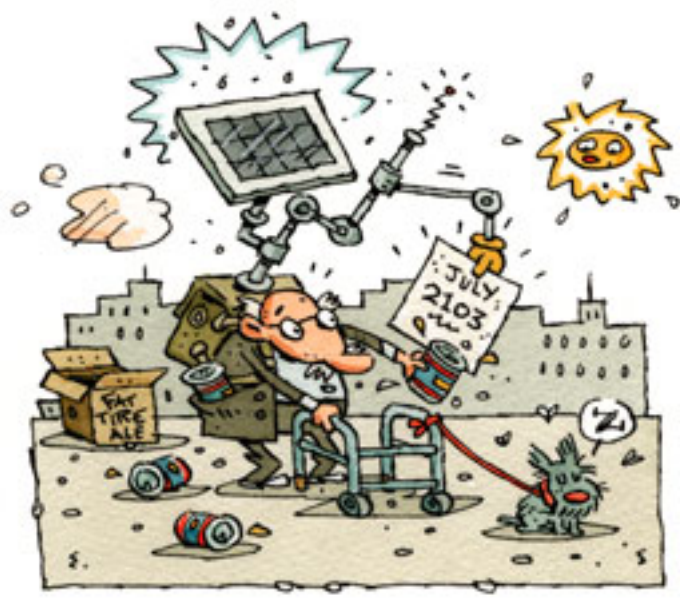
more people called or 5,000. What would Anheuser-Busch do then? Besides change their number, I mean.

This still doesn't fulfill my beer needs, however. Following Krebs's advice, I seek out Fat Tire beer, which the New Belgium Brewery in Colorado makes with wind-generated electricity. The only problem is, nobody has it. I hit six liquor stores, before finally driving to a faraway liquor superstore, which also doesn't have it. I settle for Magic Hat, whose Vermont brewery Krebs visited, leaving him with the impression that it has a "cool, liberal feel" and is made by a "cool, liberal guy." Total distance: 60 miles. Elapsed time: two hours. Not cool or liberal at all.

In fairness, some of that time was dedicated to a sidetrip to try to find a solar-powered backpack at Wal-Mart, since it was on my checklist, and I'd found one on Wal-Mart's website. But my local Wal-Mart was out of them. And it's probably just as well, since 70 percent of Wal-Mart's merchandise is made in China. Another Krebs commandment: "Beware: made in China."



Because when you think about it, who wants China practicing capitalism, providing us affordable goods while raising their standard of living? Who doesn't yearn for the glory years when China's three main exports were communism, General Tso's Chicken, and Chairman Mao's visage, the last of which provided tons of inspiring T-shirts, posters, and refrigerator magnets for American progressives.

Anyway, the purpose of a solar-powered backpack is to charge your electronic devices without global warming-causing electricity. I'm a low-tech guy. I don't use an iPad or a Kindle or a BlackBerry. Until recently, I thought a smart phone was a really handsome mobile with a lot of British admirers.

So the only reason I'd need a solar backpack is to charge my cell. But doing a few quick back-of-the-envelope calculations, I realized that my electric company co-op only charges 9.75 cents per kilowatt hour. My phone draws a tiny fraction of a kilowatt, so fully charging it amounts to hundredths of a cent per hour. But even rounding up to a penny, if I were to buy Wal-Mart's solar backpack at $113.88, that would equal 11,388 cents. I only need to charge my phone every three days, meaning that even at that overestimate, I'd have to live for about 34,164 more days (I'd be 133 years old) before the backpack paid for itself in electricity savings.

Between the miracles of modern science and Obamacare, I have an outside chance of making it that far. But even if I do, that's a long time to be hauling around a dorky backpack.

WORKING LIBERALLY

If you're a committed progressive like me, you can't just leave your politics at home. You have to bring them to work, too. If you're a destructive enough carbon-fiend to drive to work, that is. I take the occasion of the experiment to exclusively telecommute (as Krebs suggests), which not only helps save the environment, but also the embarrassment of having to face the conservative curmudgeons in my office when I have to enlist them in abetting my new liberalism.

Many of Krebs's dictates I skip outright, in the interest of pragmatism. (I think that personally installing motion-activated lights or hand driers in work restrooms would violate the building lease, for instance.) Of the requests I do make, many are met with complete nonresponsiveness. I have no takers on setting up a kitchen-duties chart so that we can collectively share cleanup responsibility. And I am a little wounded when positively nobody, not even our house hippie Fred Barnes, is interested in starting a lunch co-op or taking off early to "picnic together to make your business stronger."

One thing liberals need to feel is a sense of community. I learn this from reading a very important liberal book, Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, while sitting on my front porch, smiling and waving at my neighbors (thus pulling a Krebsian hat trick). Krebs says that "every office will benefit from its staff feeling a sense of ownership," which means a free exchange of ideas, which means a "feedback box" by which "management hears from its team."

I'm not a craftsy person, so I decide to forgo constructing a physical feedback box and set up a virtual suggestion box instead. I email colleagues that I will collect their impor-

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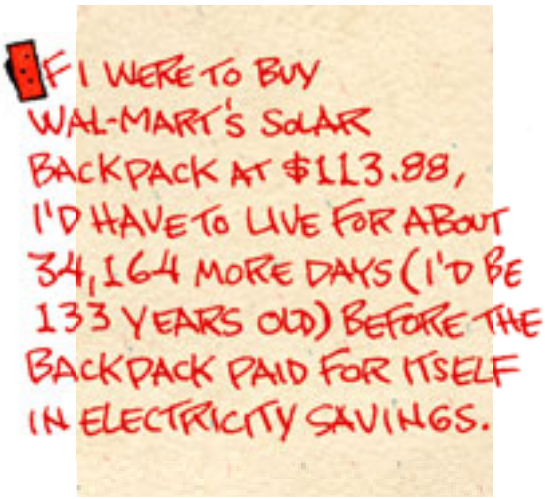
tant feedback and send it to our boss, Bill Kristol. After I open my virtual box for business, a flood of feedback comes in. Here are just some of the things my colleagues are convinced they need to make THE WEEKLY STANDARD a more positive work experience:

> More key parties . . . institute a 'buddy system' for all lavatory use . . . group showers, so we can save water and go easier on our earth mother . . . more irony in staff meetings . . . fewer first-person insertions into magazine pieces . . . prepare for Y2K . . . pension off Labash . . . change our name to 'US News & Weekly Standard Report' . . . institute an open-door trust-tree policy for managers so that employees understand that they are in a safe space to seek counsel for personal/emotional problems/issues.

I forward the results to Kristol, who seems fairly amenable. He agrees to the first three demands, and regarding group showers, vows to go "the extra mile by ending gender segregation and don't ask, don't tell." Regarding many of the suggestions from our literary editor, Phil Terzian, Kristol promises to "check on whether Terzian has too much free time."

So I bat about .500, but it's painless enough. In fact, considering we're a conservative magazine, my workplace bears strikingly little resemblance to what Krebs writes you'd be doing "if you were working conservatively": "You'd be part of a business that makes massive profits, but treats workers poorly: low wages, no benefits, limited ability to improve their workplace." We're unprofitable, are treated well by management, are relatively well compensated, and have full benefits.



Many of Krebs's other liberalizing-the-workplace suggestions I skip, because we already do them. We already recycle. We don't have a plastic-tank water cooler. We already have environmentally friendly toilets. (One feedback complaint, on account of our low-flush urinals, was, "Any chance we can get the toilets to flush properly around here?" Kristol's response: "I'm working with technicians from BP.") Krebs says to relax the office dress code. But if our dress code was any more relaxed, we'd be wearing cut-offs and half-shirts to work, making us look like some sort of neocon Mountain Dew commercial. Nobody wants to see that. Trust me.

Ticking down Krebs's laundry list, seeing how many requirements our office already fulfills, I'm left with one irrefutable conclusion: Bill Kristol is a liberal.

READING LIBERALLY

Before I converted, I used to enjoy the work of our friend and contributing editor P.J. O'Rourke. In his *Parliament of Whores*, P.J. wrote, "To call something public is to define it as dirty, insufficient and hazardous. The ultimate paradigm of social spending is the public restroom." Thank God that I'm now a progressive and don't have to tolerate this sort of intolerance anymore.

For P.J.'s glibness gives short shrift to the glorious public library system, the closest thing we have to a free bookstore. (In my case, it's more than close, since I often neglect to return library books.) One of Krebs's commandments is to "enjoy your local library," which I already do. And I find it particularly useful in knocking off my requirements, as I have to check out tons of liberal books, films, and plays on Krebs's liberal reading/viewing list. Plays like *Lysistrata*, in which the women of Greece strive to end the Peloponnesian War by refusing to have sex with their husbands until a peace treaty is signed. (O, would that that most famous of librarians, Laura Bush, had read her Aristophanes.)

But Krebs asks us to take the library experience further. He not only wants us to read progressive magazines such as *Mother Jones* and the *Nation*. In a tip he gleaned from a book called *50 Simple Things You Can Do To Fight the Right* (pick progressive themes for 4th of July parades, park in church parking lots with your Kerry/Edwards bumper sticker), he wants us to read these publications at the public library and then leave one open on the table. Not only are you conditioning others to read liberally, but when your librarians clean up after you, they'll see that the title is popular, thus increasing its chances of renewal.

I go to my local branch, where the librarians know me, and ask them for the *Nation* or *Mother Jones*. They have neither, though one thinks they carry *Mother Jones* at the main branch. "No," disagrees a second librarian, "that's *Mother Earth News*." The first one shrugs, "I know it's something with 'mother' in it." The first librarian has worked here for six years, and I ask her if she's ever heard anyone request the titles. "Can't say that I have," she says.

"Wrong," I say, "You just did."

"Yeah," she says, rolling her eyes, "that counts."

She does add that they carry some *Mother Jones* articles

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in an electronic database. So I pull one up. It's a review of *Belching Out the Devil: Global Adventures With Coca-Cola*. The book recounts Coke's "supply-chain sins," from "death squads hired by a bottler in Colombia to assassinate unionists" to a "rumored monopoly in Mexican groceries."

Keeping the spirit of Krebs's commandment, I leave the article on the screen. But it will automatically signout when my allotted time elapses. I feel I need to do more. So I go to the magazine shelves searching for something that looks both educational and inspirational. *Elle* and *People* and *Redbook* aren't exactly cutting it. So I settle for *Fitness* magazine's "Shape Up For Summer" issue. I search for a table upon which to leave it open, but all are taken by patrons checking their email or by high-school students constructing masks for an upcoming anime convention (who goes to the library to read anymore?).

The only free table I find is in the children's section. So I lay the *Fitness* open to a spread on how the actress Kristin Davis has been "hiding killer abs underneath those sweet designer dresses." They are killer, too. If you want to look hot in a bikini this summer, you should pick it up. As I walk away, I worry that I might give some chunky 6-year-old girl body issues. But maybe that's for the best. There'll be less chance of her drinking evil Coca-Cola.

With that reading assignment crossed off, I tackle something I've been dreading: reading left-wing blogs. It's not that I hate most blogs, though I do. It's more that back in my conservative days, the only time liberal blogging really entered my consciousness was when they were calling me or other conservatives I know "douchebags." Not that I have anything against feminine hygiene products. Even as a conservative, I wasn't some kind of sexist, but it sort of hurt my feelings.

I plunge in anyway and quickly learn that lefty bloggers' douche-centricness wasn't in my imagination. On Daily Kos, there is talk of "douching your day away as a teabagger," Fox's Neil Cavuto should stop "moping around like a total douche," and there are headlines such as "Hand to God, Not ALL Texans are Douche Nozzles." One Feministing blogger uses the d-word so much, that she wrote a mini-essay on the etymology of d-bags, complete with a link to the Museum of Menstruation and a vintage, 1928 douche ad.

On Firedoglake, a sort of Platonic ideal of douchery, one "macpibbles" authors a post titled "America is full of blood-sucking douchebags (Rant)." The douchebag roll-call then lists everyone from Ben Bernanke to Bill Kristol to Tim Pawlenty to Blanche Lincoln to Nancy Pelosi to Anderson Cooper to Joe Lieberman, with the powerfully argued conclusion: "There's so much douchin douchebaggery, it's dbaggin crazy. It's too bad America's being run by douchebags because us regular folks are drowning in douchiness. We're totally douched."

But I realize upon further reflection that I am reading these liberal sites all wrong. For, as my guru Krebs writes, "We are the side of inclusion, engagement, and the belief that we're all in this together—that means we have to live those values in our own conversations."

If only the douche-nozzles of the right would follow suit.

PARENTING LIBERALLY

In Krebs's world, it is not enough just to live liberally yourself, you must raise little liberals, too. A full 30 of his suggestions have to do with parenting liberally, everything from explaining to your children the causes you support to participating in collective childcare to finding "games that inspire creative thinking" since "we need liberals to be able to creatively solve the problems we're inheriting from the right wing."

I try to incorporate his commandments into my parenting regimen, and it's a disaster. I read a series of Krebs-recommended books to my sons Luke, 10, and Dean, 7. At this stage, they're pretty apolitical. If pressed, they probably consider themselves conservatives, if they even know what that means. But during the 2008 election, they pulled for Barack Obama because they enjoyed the way his name sounded.

They weren't having much of Krebsian storytime, however. First, I let them share stories, as Krebs suggests. Dean plows right in:

> Once upon a time, there was a princess. She ate a frog. She pooped out green stuff. Her hat fell out the window. The prince caught it. He threw it in the river where the crocodiles were. Since he gave it to the crocodiles, they smelled it, and hunted her down and killed her. The end.

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I stare at my son with blank bewilderment. The stories we tell are supposed to "cultivate compassion, empathy, and community spirit," I tell Dean. "What's the moral of your story, Dean?"

He gives a whaddya-want-from-me shrug: "You should never feed a crocodile a princess hat," he says.

Reading time doesn't go much better. At Krebs's insistence, I read aloud the 1973 Marlo Thomas classic *Free To Be . . . You and Me*, but the kids are more interested in the companion CD, begging me to put it on, so they can do break-dancing moves, karate kicks, and fake-lasso each other across the living room floor while listening to cloying songs such as "Parents Are People" and "It's Alright to Cry." Finally, Luke has enough: "I hate this song, it's torture. Please turn it off."

Once they finally settle down, I read them a story called "Zachary's Divorce," about a kid named Zachary, whose parents have just gotten divorced, and whose mom reassures him that it's not his fault. "If your mom and I ever get a divorce," I say, "just know that you two are to blame."

"Really?" asks Luke.

"Don't be so dumb," admonishes his wised-up brother.

But the story prompts the boys to hold a symposium on who they like better/who'd they go with in a divorce, me or my wife. "It's a tie," Luke says diplomatically. "But she's cleaner. I'm sorry for saying that. I just had to spit that out." Also, Dean adds, "You cuss all the time when you're mad. Not trying to be mean. It's just your hobby, I guess."

"Yeah," adds Luke, "you're good at your hobby."

I figure we might have better luck playing nonelimination games of inclusion I get from Terry Orlick's book *Cooperative Games and Sports.* But something about the Nerf nature of playing games with titles like "Cooperative Musical Hugs" and "Collective Score Blanketball" brings out my sons' inner hooligan, causing several shoving matches, a mini-fistfight, and declarations that "Victory is mine," even though we're all supposed to be winners.

At one point, playing "Grasshopper in the Blanket" on our deck, which involves us throwing up Dean's stuffed monkey, Stevie, and catching him in a blanket, as many times as we can to see if we can achieve a high collective score, Luke finally drops his corner of the blanket as Stevie flies off into the grill. Luke's worried the neighbors might see us: "Dad, this is gay."

"Don't say gay in that context," I reprimand, ever the dutiful progressive father.

"It used to mean 'happy,'" protests Luke.

"Well it doesn't anymore," I say.

Krebs stresses how important it is to parent liberally by being "playful" with your children and another of his strongest admonitions is to enjoy public and national parks. I decide to take the boys to the nearby Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, which sits on my beloved Patuxent River in Maryland, just miles upriver from where I regularly kayak and fish at my in-laws' house.

I often take the boys on outdoor excursions, realizing that the years pass rapidly, and they will soon be surly teenagers, embarrassed to be seen in public with their old man, and thus much harder to milk for material.

While, like Krebs, I am grateful that the federal and local governments protect large tracts of land from rapacious developers, I'm less enthusiastic about how park-ranger types seem to protect glorious nature from actual nature-lovers. I try to cultivate an appreciation of natural wonders in my children, but as I often tell them, "God gave us the rivers, Parks & Recreation didn't."

I've had my share of problems at the Jug Bay sanctuary. It seems to be open for a few hours a couple days a week, and I never seem to correctly guess when those hours are. Over the years, I've been asked to leave for walking through the park offhours. I've been asked to leave for bringing my dog. I've been chased down by a truck while riding my bike to an old railroad bridge pier to fish. After the park employee caught up with me, I was, surprise, asked to leave (the irony being lost on the employee that he pursued me in a vehicle to tell me not to disrupt the delicate ecology of the park by riding my bike in truck tracks).

It's 90 degrees, so there's no way my kids will make it far on foot, and I decide we'll go by bike. And so, while driving there, I quiz them on appropriate responses to park authorities. "If somebody tells us not to ride bikes, what do we do?" I ask.

"Be quiet and listen?" responds Luke.

I wince.

I STARE AT MY SON WITH BLANK BEWILDERMENT. THE STORIES WE TELL ARE SUPPOSED TO 'CULTIVATE COMPASSION, EMPATHY, AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT,' I TELL DEAN. 'WHAT'S THE MORAL OF YOUR STORY?' 'YOU SHOULD NEVER FEED A CROCODILE A PRINCESS HAT,' HE SAYS.

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He tries again: "Pretend to listen to them, then go anyway?" My son.

When we get there, I quickly unrack the bikes, and we tear off down the trail before anyone can stop us. There are signs everywhere warning park vehicles to slow for turtles. The river below is thick with spatterdock and pickerelweed. Our bikes slalom through trails lined with Green Ash, Red Maple, and Swamp Magnolia, while the skies overhead are patrolled by red-tail hawks, ospreys, and even the occasional bald eagle.

We have a fine time of it. But when we return, and I start re-racking the bikes, as sure as the sun rises, a park employee comes shuffling across the parking lot. "For future reference," she says, "there's no biking here. We are a sanctuary."

"Really?" I say. "You allow vehicles to go through. There's no sign saying 'no biking.'"

"Well," she says, "we have one on our website."

I thank her for her attention, telling her we just finished biking, so we won't be needing to anymore today. Back in the car, the kids are puzzled. "Man," says Luke. "Isn't it annoying when people try to ruin our walks and rides? They don't let us do anything. They don't allow dogs. They don't allow bikes. They only allow turtles."

"Yes," I say, trying to share my values. "But we learned an important lesson."

"Don't bike there?" asks Dean.

No, I say, trying to bring it home. I explain to them that my assignment is to live liberally, and that classic liberalism was all about fighting for freedoms to do things (for voting rights, for civil rights, etc.). But that modern liberalism is mostly about people telling you what you *can't* do—no smoking, no sodas in schools, no trans fats, no biking in parks.

"Some people tell you to question authority," I explain, "But if you never ask authority for permission in the first place, they can't tell you no."

The boys nod their heads in unison, both of them wearing conspiratorial smiles. Sharing values can be rewarding. Let's just hope they don't tell their mother.

LIVING LIBERALLY: THE LIGHTNING ROUND

For ten days, Krebs's liberal checklist has been my church (though if I were actually selecting a church, based on his list, it would have to be one "that uses gender-neutral liturgy"). I try to knock off as many of his commandments as possible. I go to Starbucks to haggle with the barista over giving discounts to mug users. He gives me 10 cents off, though whatever I gain financially, I lose in masculinity points, by ordering a "Venti Skinny Cinnamon Dolce Latte." (Even now, I hate myself for saying it.)

I seek to volunteer my job skills. Though when I plug in "journalist" to an online volunteer-match site, it says that I am qualified to be a cattery assistant for the United Way, a Girl Scout troop leader, or a barber at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute. I look into "socially-conscious hunting." Krebs says one way to do this is to not drive to your hunting spot. Whereas a hunter friend of mine says a socially-conscious hunter "removes other people's litter from the land he is hunting, beginning with the 'Posted' signs on a great new place he has just found."

Much of being a liberal seems to be about being a joiner. So I look into joining most of the organizations on Krebs's list: Working America, Social Venture Network, Freelancers Union, Green Drinks, Karma Krew. I try to join a flash mob, even though it's so 2003, but the only one I can find wants to re-create a dance number from the television show *Glee*. (Too gay, if I may break my own parenting rule.) Neither do I join Net Impact, "a global network of leaders who are changing the world through business"—their membership fee is too steep. But I do nominate myself for their "Force for Change Award"—on account of all the agents of change I am joining.

One night, I go to a "Laughing Liberally" comedy show at an America's Future Now! conference of progressives in Washington, D.C. They seem to be trying to alter the very space-time continuum by addressing America's future, in the present. Even the sexagenarians tote messenger bags, the

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better to haul around the literature that comes from organizations all of which seem to have either "progress" or "change" or "community" in their titles. Attendees wear complicated sandals and New Balance tennis shoes. If you wore New Balance sandals, you'd immediately be made vice president of the Institute for Changing Communities in Progress.

Krebs himself is there—he looks a little like the actor Adrian Grenier with a ponytail—greeting people at the door. He kicks off the comedy by informing everyone that the left is funnier than the right: "We all know that conservatives cannot keep up with us in comedy. So what you're about to see for the next hour is our greatest structural advantage as a movement." If that's so, the movement is in trouble.

While there's one funny comedian—Lee Camp—it's a dreary parade of weak comics telling too-easy groaners about Teabaggers and Fox News and Pat Buchanan and fat Americans. All of these are ripe for satirizing, they're just not being satirized particularly well. Krebs and my new friends on the left like to think they're comedically superior to the right because they have Jon Stewart on their side. And even if you think Stewart is a douche-nozzle—to borrow the lefty blogger term of endearment—he is pretty funny. Though just because Jon Stewart is funny, and you share his politics, doesn't make you funny by osmosis. If my new side takes credit for Jon Stewart, we also have to take credit for Dick Gregory and Janeane Garofalo (Krebs actually does for the former: watching Gregory clips is on his checklist). Plus, it's hard to take any person seriously as being funny who refers to their "structural advantage as a movement."

Sometimes, Krebs's commandments are in conflict. He wants us to cover our televisions, but also wants us to watch more Keith Olbermann. So I combine the two by turning on Keith Olbermann while covering my television. I can't see him, which is definitely an improvement. Though I can still hear his "You, sir!" Eyebrows of Outrage, which rustle like a man in the bushes in a public park, having unprotected sex with the sound of his own voice.

Krebs also wants us to watch political television with our neighbors. He's big on being neighborly, even suggesting we celebrate "Won't You Be My Neighbor Day," in which you wear a cardigan and act like Mr. Rogers, committing random acts of neighborliness. I decide to skip that one on account of being straight. But I do set up an MSNBC-watching appointment with the elderly couple who lives next door, Pat and Clarence Croy.

I bring over a blueberry pie (for them) and a bottle of Maker's Mark (for me), which I figure might help me get through Chris Matthews's documentary on "The Rise of the New Right." We are already pretty neighborly neighbors. Pat gives me phenomenal tomatoes from her garden and waters our plants when we're on vacation. And I sometimes go over and sit with Clarence, who is paralyzed on one side of his body from a cerebral hemorrhage he suffered in 1996.

I bring him audio books, mostly about fishing since he loves the water, and tell him stories about my reporting travels, while he relates stories from his younger days, when he worked on a steamboat on the Mississippi River. We both love to fish—except he hasn't been able to do it since '96. So Pat and I recently put him in a wheelchair and took him to a nearby pond, so he could catch some bluegill on my fly rod (since he only has the use of one hand, he held the rod, while I retrieved line). He wrote a beautiful thank-you note afterwards. It seemed like we were getting along famously as neighbors, though that was back when I was a conservative, so I was probably doing it wrong, since as Krebs writes, being neighborly, conservative-style, "is a far cry from the diverse, inclusive world a liberal envisions."

AFTER THE PARK EMPLOYEE CAUGHT UP WITH ME, I WAS, SURPRISE, ASKED TO LEAVE (THE IRONY BEING LOST ON THE EMPLOYEE THAT HE PURSUED ME IN A VEHICLE TO TELL ME NOT TO DISRUPT THE DELICATE ECOLOGY OF THE PARK BY RIDING MY BIKE IN TRUCK TRACKS.)

Clarence's hospital-style bed stays in their living room, so we watch Matthews's documentary sitting beside it. It's a lot funnier than the Laughing Liberally show, though unintentionally. With all the ominous music and montages of camouflaged conservatives, you'd think the right consisted solely of Sarah Palin leading throngs of weapons-toting militia members out of the woods, ready to burn Obama on a pyre of phony birth certificates. It shouldn't have run on MSNBC. It should've run on the Cartoon Network.

But Pat and Clarence don't seem much interested in it. The Croys regularly vote Republican, and Clarence loves to tell me Obama jokes, saying that "health care is the biggest farce that ever happened. The way it's going now, it'd be cheaper for me to have a funeral than pay for prescriptions." "He's in the donut hole," his wife adds.

But they prefer to vote "for the man instead of the party." Clarence names Franklin Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Clinton as excellent presidents. "And they were all Democrats," he says. "Clinton was a good president, he just wasn't a good person." As alarmist images and rhetoric beam in over

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MSNBC, they're largely dismissive. "I'm not a Sarah Palin fan," says Pat. "Though I think she's kind of cute. But she's never going to be president, so nobody has to worry."

Neither of them cares much for talking-head TV. They watch *Meet the Press* occasionally. Neither watches Fox News. "That kind of TV," Pat says, "is for people who need to be validated. I don't need to be validated." Clarence has been chained to his bed for 14 years, but says if he watched political shows all the time, "I'd go insane." Instead, he prefers "my books—they help a lot"—everything from Clive Cussler to Old English poetry.

The documentary ends, and I'm tempted to force Clarence and Pat through *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*. But in Clarence's condition, he's not allowed to drink, and it doesn't seem fair.

One place drinking is encouraged is at a local Drinking Liberally chapter meeting, held each Thursday at a Ruby Tuesday's in a Virginia suburb. I arrive first, and order a Maker's Mark, which—points for Krebs—he identifies as his favorite whiskey. It's mine too. He likes it because they recycle the byproducts of their distillation, and so you can "drink it with a clean and green conscience." I'd probably still drink it if its mash bill called for baby-seal blood.

But as ESPN blares from the bar television, I dutifully quiz my bartender, asking him what he knows about Maker's, everything from their labor practices to whether they confront the ills associated with alcohol. He doesn't know much, God love him. Though he does think the bourbon maker addresses the latter by issuing coasters urging people to "be courteous to other drinkers."

The group arrives one by one—about a dozen in all. I haven't told them in advance I was coming, so when I break the news that I'm a reporter for a conservative magazine and pull my tape recorder out, I expect them to tell me to get bent. But they generously welcome me. One of the group leaders, Michelle Elliot, a software engineer, even tells me that her life-partner works for Firedoglake. But if she thinks I'm a douche-nozzle, she keeps it to herself, as we tuck in for a completely agreeable evening of interrogation and polite sparring.

I chide them a bit for convening at a corporatist chain restaurant, even if Ruby Tuesdays does have an impressive salad bar, with all manner of fresh ingredients and a stunning array of croutons. They give me the business for drinking too liberally after I order a third Maker's (child's play, I assure them, I'm a professional journalist after all), suggesting I might be the first member of their group that they have to drive home.

Because of my machine-gun questioning, we cover the waterfront, everything from their thoughts on BP to whether to avoid Wal-Mart to whether it's okay to meet at chain restaurants to the evils of Ann Coulter and Meghan McCain's political viability (one gay-activist type mentions her as being one of the only Republicans he likes, though hearing the words "Meghan's platform" nearly makes me do a spit-take).

It's a pleasant conversation. I lapse back into my conservative nature as a result of a liberal intake of my liberal whiskey, but there are no hostilities. Nobody changes anybody's mind. It's not life or death. It bears little resemblance to television screech-matches, which as one of my drinking mates, Aaron Oesterle, says, "is not about discussion, it's about finding everybody who agrees with me, and shouting the loudest." We encounter each other as individuals, leaving room for complexities and ambiguities, instead of assuming a mere set of prefab conclusions. Oesterle, who works at a space-related consultancy, says, "It's easy to assume large-scale. But when you engage one-on-one, it's more difficult to make assumptions on a smaller scale."

Another of my drinking companions, Claiborn Booker, recasts F. Scott Fitzgerald's notion that the rich are different than you and me. "So are the very political," he says. "They have a different sort of calculus that goes on in their minds, and as a result, we see some of that manifesting itself in the polarization of political debate."

The group tells me that they often don't discuss politics very much at their political gatherings. "Most of us live in the middle muddle," Booker says. "We have certain tendencies in some directions. But we're by and large caring people, have a kindly disposition toward our fellow sufferers, so we want socially to have kindness or gentleness be a part of our character. But at the same time, we want to make sure that we get to keep what we earn and we want to have a strong defense. So finding that right balance is a perennial problem."

After making a night of it, I like these people. Enough that I'd like to drink with them. Besides a mojito, a Sea Breeze, and a pint of Newcastle, most of them seem to stick with iced tea or water. It makes me worry for them. It makes me question their "drinking liberally" commitment. So as we wind down, I ask, "Who wants to go drinking, now that we've been drinking?" There are no takers. "It's a school night," one says.

It's just as well. It's hard work, politicizing your whole life. And looking at Krebs's checklist, I still have a lot in front of me: I have to remind my elected officials about the importance of open space, to speak up for progressive taxation, to ask friends to identify every news channel's bias, to look at how movie posters treat women, to watch *Battlestar Galactica*, which "got people debating torture and occupation," and to "reconsider the liberal message of the moon landing." That's just for starters. As one of my favorite liberals H.L. Mencken said: "Liberals have many tails, and chase them all." ♦

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WrestleMania in Connecticut

Having built a billion-dollar sports business is Linda McMahon's calling card in the Senate race—it's also her Achilles' heel.

By Jonathan V. Last

Barring cataclysm, Connecticut Republicans will nominate Linda McMahon to run for Chris Dodd's vacant Senate seat on August 10. McMahon is a political neophyte. Her chief credential is that she was CEO of America's largest professional wrestling outfit, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE).

McMahon is not the first figure from professional wrestling to enter politics. In 1974, Jim Crockett, who ran the National Wrestling Alliance, ran for the Senate in North Carolina. He finished sixth in a field of six in the GOP primary. And, in 1990, Jesse "The Body" Ventura was elected mayor of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. Eight years later, he was governor of the state.

But McMahon may be the first person to run for office for whom wrestling is not merely a name-recognition bonus, but rather the raison d'être of her campaign. It is both McMahon's signal achievement and her most glaring vulnerability.

Linda McMahon in her days as CEO of the World Wrestling Federation

GETTY / JEAN-CHRISTIAN BOURCART / LIAISON

Connecticut has been tough sledding for Republicans for more than half-a-century. Since 1953, Connecticut has sent just one Republican to the Senate: Lowell Weicker. A very liberal Republican, Weicker served three terms in the Senate before being elected governor in 1990. McMahon and her husband Vince have known Weicker for many years. In 1999, when the WWE went public, Weicker was appointed to the company's board of directors.

In the mid-1980s, the McMahons became friendly with NBC producer Dick Ebersol and his wife, the actress Susan Saint James. James got Linda McMahon involved with the Special Olympics, a cause which she and her husband have vigorously supported ever since. This involvement formed another bond with Weicker, whose son, Sonny, is both developmentally disabled and a big wrestling fan. Weicker named McMahon to the governor's council for the World Special Olympics.

Weicker, who supported Obama in 2008, is not much loved by national Republicans, but Linda McMahon needs all the friends she can get in Connecticut. In 2000 Al Gore carried the state by 56 percent to 38 percent. John Kerry slipped a bit, winning only by 10 points, but in 2008 Barack Obama came storming back, carrying it by a 23-point margin. First elected to the Senate in 1980 with 56 percent of the vote, Chris Dodd won reelection four times, and was under 65 percent only once.

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McMahon declared for the race in September 2009 assuming she would face Dodd, increasingly unpopular and burdened by financial scandals. Dodd stepped aside in January, and the state's longtime attorney general, Dick Blumenthal, became the presumptive Democratic nominee. But Blumenthal has been exposed as having lied—in a serial manner—about having served in Vietnam. And elections around the country have revealed a strong sentiment against career politicians. McMahon's political inexperience has been transformed from a bug to a feature.

And then there's the money. McMahon rides into battle with the ability to self-finance an enormous campaign operation. She has already spent $16.5 million of her own money (and the Republican primary isn't until August). McMahon has said she's willing to spend $50 million on the race. Blumenthal has raised a total of $2.3 million thus far. Charlie Cook rates the contest as only "leans Democratic," which is remarkable for a Senate race in the Nutmeg State.

McMahon was born Linda Marie Edwards in New Bern, North Carolina, in 1948. She attended East Carolina University and married her high-school sweetheart, Vince McMahon, in 1966. Vince was the son of a wrestling impresario who owned the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF). Back then, professional wrestling was not a national product. A handful of promoters owned individual associations, which controlled discrete territories. McMahon's WWWF dominated the Northeast, making it one of the sport's bigger promotions.

In those days, wrestlers were essentially carnies. They barnstormed from town to town trying to sucker "marks" (what the industry calls paying customers to this day) into buying tickets to their shows. With no national following, it was easy for a wrestler to bounce from one territory to another whenever his act got stale. Very few people—even in management—made much money.

The McMahons spent the early part of their marriage promoting minor league hockey and various Evel Knievel-like events. Vince finally bought the business from his father in 1982.

Not content to run a regional enterprise, the McMahons believed they could use television to create a national brand. Promoters had put wrestling on television for decades, but always as an afterthought. The McMahons aggressively sought out television contracts in scores of local markets on UHF channels. They gave their shows away—and in some cases even paid stations to air them. The idea was to use television as billboards for live shows. It worked.

The renamed World Wrestling Federation (WWF) was already gobbling up its competitors when the McMahons discovered cable. As the cable revolution was spreading through middle America, the McMahons found that hungry new cable stations were desperate for product to fill airtime. They signed a deal with the USA network, which quickly became a cash-cow. By 1985, their USA show had brought them enough visibility to entice NBC to air a series of wrestling specials in their Saturday late-night slot. The WWF had gone from carnival attraction to network programming.

In 1985, the McMahons made another discovery. They staged a yearly wrestling mega-show—"WrestleMania"—and were trying to find a way to milk ancillary dollars from the event. By WrestleMania III, a new technology appeared which allowed people with cable TV to buy a special hook-up to see individual shows. It was called Pay Per View and the McMahons were the first promoters to embrace it. The McMahons sold $1.6 million worth of tickets to WrestleMania III, but $10 million worth of PPV hook-ups. From there it was off to the races, with the WWF soon putting on a dozen PPV events a year. It would not be much of a stretch to say that the entire modern cable on-demand structure dates from WrestleMania III. In 1999 the McMahons took their company public and became instant billionaires.

It is impossible to fully understand the division of labor within the company. Vince McMahon has always been its public face and is largely believed to be the big-picture visionary. Linda McMahon's roles—as president, chief operating officer, and finally chief executive officer—have been mostly behind the scenes. In 1989, for instance, she lobbied the New Jersey legislature to move the WWF from the category of "sport" to "entertainment"—an admission that wrestling is staged. This canny maneuver exempted the company from a 10 percent tax on tickets to legitimate sporting events.

Among those who care about professional wrestling—such people exist—there is much debate over whether the McMahons have been good or bad for wrestling. But that question is a little like asking if P.T. Barnum was good for the circus. At some point the McMahons—particularly Vince—*became* professional wrestling, and it is no longer possible to imagine what the industry would have been like without them.

This is not to say that the McMahons turn everything they touch to gold. There were plenty of missteps through the years, from money-losing wrestling movies to a stillborn WWF perfume to a failed World BodyBuilding Federation. Their most high-profile failure was an attempt to create a rival to the National Football League; the XFL folded after 10 games in 2001.

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But the McMahons have always rebounded from their setbacks. And Linda McMahon is on the rise in Connecticut. In January, polls had Blumenthal as much as +41 against McMahon. By May, Blumenthal's lead was in the 20s. In June, both camps released internal polls showing his lead in the mid-teens.

Politically, McMahon is a good fit for Connecticut. She's moderate, being both pro-choice and pro-TARP, and no one will confuse her with a Tea Party candidate. She's positioning her campaign to focus on unemployment and fiscal discipline, two areas where she can legitimately claim expertise, since she ran a company which created thousands of jobs over the years, but always with an eye toward tight budgets. In these respects, today's WWE should serve her well.

But if the WWE is McMahon's calling card, it's also her chief weakness. The WWE may be a billion-dollar company, but the success is accompanied by some unpleasant history, ranging from charges of drug use and sexual misconduct to complaints of business double-dealing. The scandals are numerous and have been heavily detailed in investigative articles and books, though they are hotly disputed by the McMahons. Linda McMahon's biggest concern, however, isn't wrestling world gossip. It's steroids.

'Ravishing' Rick Rude in his glory days

RUSSELL TURIAK / GETTY IMAGES

Wrestling in general, and the WWE in particular, has a long history with steroids. In court testimony, Hulk Hogan once estimated that as many as 80 percent of wrestlers used steroids during the 1980s. In 1991, Bruno Sammartino quipped, "There was a joke: If you did not test positive for steroids, you were fired."

Steroids were not always illegal. It wasn't until 1988 that steroid distribution was criminalized, and 1991 that steroids were reclassified as controlled substances. Even after these changes in the law, however, wrestlers found doctors to prescribe them. One of these was a Pennsylvania physician named George Zahorian.

He worked as the house doctor at many of the WWE events the McMahons put on over the years. In 1989, the FBI began investigating him for steroid trafficking. In 1991 he was convicted on 12 counts of distributing controlled substances and sent to prison. In the course of the investigation, the FBI discovered numerous Federal Express receipts from Zahorian to dozens of people in the WWE. Some of the shipments were sent directly to the company's headquarters in Stamford. Some of them were addressed to Vince McMahon.

Following the Zahorian conviction, a federal prosecutor in New York pursued McMahon. By 1993, prosecutors had convened a grand jury and were rolling through the WWE's headquarters with subpoenas on a regular basis. In November, they indicted Vince McMahon on three counts of conspiring to distribute steroids. It remains unclear why a New York prosecutor was pushing the case since the alleged acts mostly took place in Connecticut and the chief witness, Zahorian, was in Pennsylvania. If the Connecticut and Pennsylvania authorities didn't think they had enough evidence to pursue McMahon, then New York probably shouldn't have done so either. McMahon took the government to trial and beat the charges. Two of them were dismissed on jurisdictional grounds, and McMahon was found not guilty on the third.

Linda McMahon's steroid problem, however, isn't a question of legality. And it's not, as steroids usually are in sports such as baseball, about "fairness," with people worried that roided-up athletes had an advantage over clean ones. The problem is that over the last few decades, professional wrestlers who worked for the WWE have been dropping dead at a terrifying rate.

Some of the deaths are more notable than others. In 2007, WWE star Chris Benoit killed his wife and son before committing suicide. Benoit was 40. (Steroids were found in his house.) Eddie Guerrero, another former WWE champ, was found dead in a hotel room. The cause of death was heart failure. He was 38. Bam Bam Bigelow, Mike Awesome, Crash Holly, Umaga, Yokozuna, Brian Pillman, Davey Boy Smith, Rick Rude, Big Boss Man, Earthquake, Curt Hennig, Hercules, Big John Studd, Road Warrior Hawk, Chris Kanyon, Andrew "Test" Martin—all of these former WWE stars have died in recent years. None was older than 46. This is a partial list.

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In 2004, *USA Today* did a study of the death rates of professional wrestlers. They found that between 1997 and 2004 about 1,000 people under the age of 45 worked in professional wrestling (this included not just the WWE, but many minor circuits). During that period, 65 of them—1 in 15—died. Keith Pinckard, a medical examiner who tracks pro wrestling deaths, has calculated that wrestlers have a death rate 7 times higher than the general population and are 12 times more likely to die from heart disease than other Americans in the same age groups.

Steroids—and the accompanying prescription drugs many wrestlers take to cope with the chronic body pain they develop—have long been part of the wrestling lifestyle. Explaining the common use of steroids and pain pills, one wrestler told *USA Today*, "It's part of the job. If you want to be a wrestler, you have to be a big guy, and you have to perform in pain. If you choose to do neither, pick another profession." The same argument has often been made about professional football, where large men do long-term damage to their bodies. But *USA Today*'s study showed that professional wrestlers are *20 times* more likely than professional football players to die before the age of 45.

The question that lingers is the level of the McMahons' involvement in wrestling's steroids problem. Were they ignorant of what their employees were doing, or were they complicit in it? During the McMahon trial, former WWE wrestler Kevin Wacholz testified that Vince McMahon pushed him to take steroids as part of his employment. "I suggest you go on the gas," Wacholz recalled McMahon telling him. When Wacholz demurred, he claimed that McMahon insisted, saying, "Well, life's not fair. The ball's in your court."

During the trial, the prosecution produced a memo from Linda McMahon to one of her deputies, Pat Patterson. Dated December 1, 1989, it instructed Patterson to fire Zahorian and warn him that the feds might be investigating: "Although you and I discussed before about continuing to have Zahorian at our events as the doctor on call, I think that is now not a good idea," she wrote. "Vince agreed, and would like for you to call Zahorian and to tell him not to come to any more of our events and to also clue him in on any action that the Justice Department is thinking of taking." Patterson called Zahorian who, according to his lawyer, immediately began moving the records about the wrestlers he was supplying to his lawyer's office.

In 1991, after Zahorian was convicted, the McMahons instituted a rigorous steroid testing program for the WWE. In 1996, they suspended it. Linda McMahon would later explain to a congressional investigation that they canceled testing because "It just wasn't cost effective for us to continue to do it." After Guerrero's high-profile death in 2005, the company started testing again.

It's one thing to be the head of a successful company. It's another to be head of a successful company whose current and former employees die at headline-worthy rates. In a recent interview with *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, Linda McMahon was asked about whether steroids might have contributed to some of the untimely passings in her industry. Her response:

> There's some evidence of muscle disease, or cardiac disease, but it's really hard to know because you didn't know the condition of the performer's heart, or whatever, prior to. So I still don't think we know the long-term effects of steroids. They are continuing to study it more and more, but I don't believe there are a lot of studies out there today that are conclusive.

Clarifying McMahon's stance, spokesman Ed Patru says that the candidate "believes steroids can have long-term negative effects—both physical and psychiatric—and those negative effects are exacerbated with abuse." And he offers a more cogent explanation of the WWE's progress over the years. Wrestling was, Patru argues, a Wild West, rough-and-tumble world in the 1960s and 1970s. However unorthodox the industry appears today, though, it is still a world apart from how it was before the McMahons took over. "A cultural change occurred," Patru says, "and it did not happen by accident. This cultural change has come about because of a concerted focus on health and well-being and responsible living, and it was made possible through a strong and responsible corporate structure. No company drove this cultural change more than WWE, and it occurred because of Linda's leadership."

It's unclear whether this explanation will be sufficient to put the issue to rest. McMahon's chief rival for the Republican nomination was Rob Simmons, a retired U.S. Army colonel and three-term member of the House of Representatives. He began the race as the frontrunner and tried mightily to get people to notice what had happened with steroids in the WWE. McMahon breezed past him in the polls before winning the overwhelming endorsement of the Connecticut Republican elite at the state party's nominating convention in May, after which Simmons suspended his campaign. It's hard to imagine that Blumenthal won't try the same tactic, putting large sums of money behind it.

In a political environment so remarkably unstable, it's tough to know exactly what will, or won't, matter to voters this year. It's a classic wrestling tease. And we'll have to wait until November for the reveal. ♦

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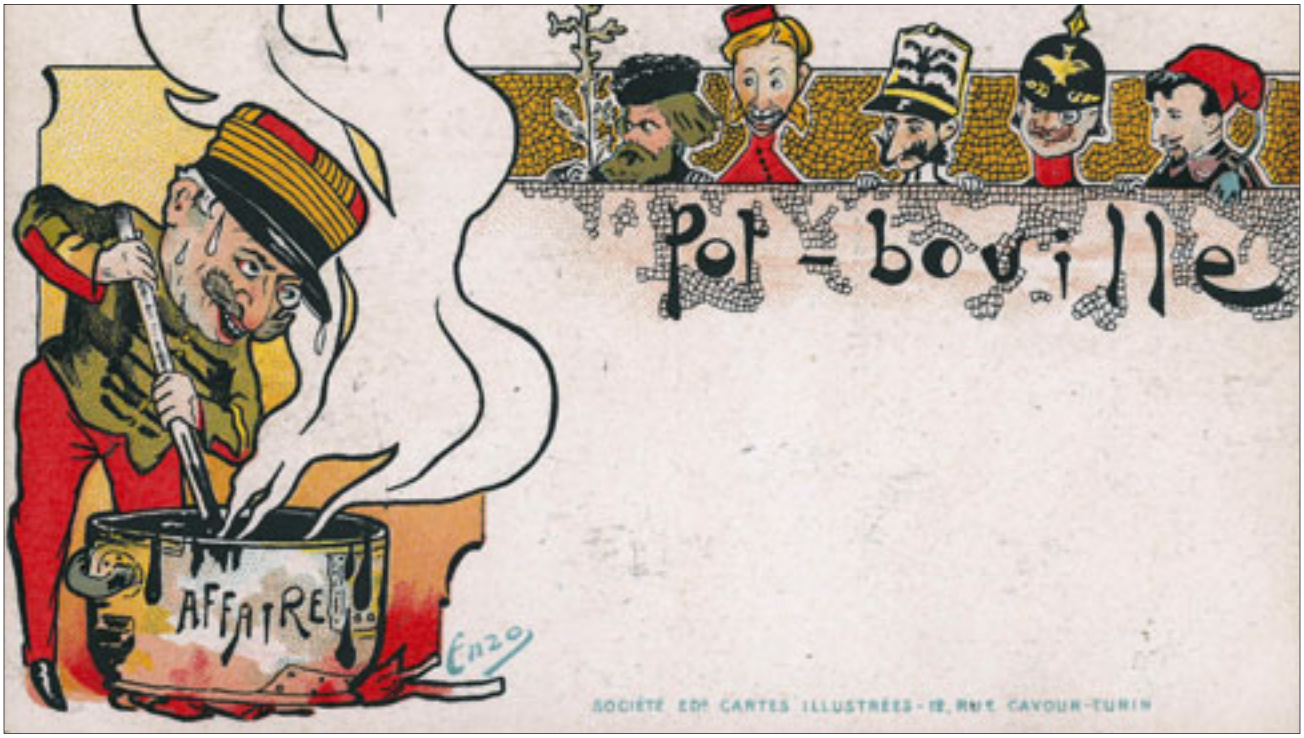

A contemporary view of the case, ca. 1900

The Dreyfus Wars

They were fought on several fronts

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

I was brought up on *une certaine idée de l'affaire Dreyfus*. A loyal captain of the French armed forces had been crudely framed, at the cusp of the 19th and 20th centuries, on an espionage accusation which was known by many of his superiors to be false (and indeed, known by several of them to be layable to the charge of another officer). The loyal captain was Jewish, which meant that much of the French establishment both assumed his guilt and, even when this position became forensically impossible, refused to admit his innocence. There ensued a battle royal in which French society was riven between the Roman Catholic Church, the high command, and the political right, and an alliance of socialists and secularists—partially embodied in the unbending figures of Emile Zola and Jean Jaurès—who held out not "merely" for the right of the individual but for a wider social justice.

Christopher Hitchens, a columnist for Vanity Fair, *is the author, most recently, of* Hitch-22: A Memoir.

Dreyfus
Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century
by Ruth Harris
Metropolitan, 560 pp., $35

Nor was this drama (journalistically evoked by Barbara Tuchman in *The Proud Tower* and made imperishable as a permanent thread in the intricate warp and woof of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*) merely about itself. It crystalized the numerous anxieties of the *fin de siècle* and presaged the coming of the First World War. It curtain-raised the long battle between Republican France and the forces of reaction, who eventually preferred even the stain of Vichy to the values of 1789. As Charles Maurras, founder and teacher of the Catholic fascist movement Action Française, was being sentenced as a collaborator after 1945, he was heard to murmur: "*Enfin, c'est la revanche de Dreyfus*."

Nor did this exhaust the historical weight and resonance of *l'affaire*. Watching the Parisian mob yelling for Jewish blood outside the courtroom, an Austrian Jewish newspaper correspondent named Theodor Herzl experienced a vertiginous sense of insecurity in Europe and resolved to secularize the ancient Jewish theme of a return to the Holy Land. Proust's own satires on Zionism in *Sodom and Gomorrah* notwithstanding, the Dreyfus case became a hinge of that argument, too.

Ruth Harris's rather beautiful and complex study is a conscious attempt to add, or better say restore, the layers of ambiguity that are lost if we accept this

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almost classical model of confrontation between darkness and enlightenment. It's not that she is, in any usual sense, a revisionist. Indeed, her restatement of the essential and unarguable point—the complete innocence of Captain Alfred Dreyfus—could scarcely be bettered. He was disgracefully railroaded from the moment in October 1894 that he was summoned to the office of Commandant Armand du Paty de Clam (a name so Clouseau-like that Art Buchwald would have shrunk from inventing it) and tricked into writing a "dictation" that supposedly matched the handwriting on a secret letter recovered from the waste-basket of the German embassy. Swiftly convicted and then stripped of his uniform in public, in front of a sadistic crowd far worse than any ever assembled by the guillotine, he was shipped to the hellish prison-colony of Devil's Island where the guards—I had not previously savored this detail—amused themselves by feeding him small morsels of rotting pork. Degradation to one side, the clear intention of the French authorities was that Dreyfus would not survive to live out his sentence.

A number of larger historical elements were involved in this collapse into an almost medieval anti-Semitism, in which the imagery of Judas and the sick rumors of blood-libel were revived by the nationalist right. Official France had not recovered from the ignominious defeat it had suffered during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, nor from the proletarian uprising of the Paris Commune that had succeeded the capitulation to Bismarck. And the Dreyfus family, like many of the principals in the case, was from Alsace. This meant that, in addition to being Jewish, they had to live down the suspicion of being German. Trying too hard to "pass" as French—Dreyfus was always ultra-patriotic—was a cause of suspicion in itself. Then, Paris at that period was continually swept by spy fever and hysteria: what Professor Harris calls "the paranoia of surveillance." Finally, the scandals of the Panama Canal Company and the Union Générale, two investment opportunities that had imploded, leaving many smallholders bankrupt, had been widely blamed on mysterious Jewish financiers. All that was needed to complete the picture was the widespread identification of Jews with the left as well as with finance and capital, and their literally enviable success in the professions after the Republic had lifted many of their legal disabilities.

To this wide-front confrontation, between secular and Catholic France, militaristic and socialist France, republican and monarchist France, and to some extent urban and rural France, we owe the coinage of the vague but indispensable term "intellectual." I had always thought this to have been invented purely as a term of abuse by the conservative partisans of *la France profonde*, but it seems that it was briefly employed in a positive manner by Georges Clemenceau, to describe the number of independent-minded thinkers who had rallied to the cause of Dreyfus after Zola had used Clemenceau's pages in *L'Aurore* to publish his unforgettable open letter, *J'Accuse*. It was only after this that Maurice Barrès, the much admired novelist, had written a smoldering and sinister essay entitled "The Protestations of the Intellectuals," in which he opined that "Jews and Protestants aside, the list called the 'list of the intellectuals' consists of a majority of fatheads, and then of foreigners—and finally of a few good Frenchmen." (Many were those who jeered that Zola himself was of Italian origin.) It was left to those thus attacked to adopt the term—as had those once denounced as "impressionist"—as their own self-definition.

By this stage, the actual question of Dreyfus's guilt was more or less an irrelevance. Lieutenant Colonel Georges Picquart, another Alsatian as it happens, had lived up to his billing as an intelligence officer and discovered that Dreyfus's handwriting in no way matched the scrawl on the German embassy paper. Probing only a little further, he was to find that the incriminating letter was an exact replica of the script of Commandant Walsin Esterhazy, a Flashman-style rogue and plunger and Jew-hater whose numerous duels, adulteries, and corruptions kept him permanently in need of funds.

It should all have been over at that point. But one of the many merits of this scrupulous and well-written book is to remind us how obscenely protracted the whole business was. Repatriated from Devil's Island in a jittery and emaciated state after four years of maltreatment and isolation, Dreyfus was subjected to a second court-martial in the city of Rennes—a virtual provincial capital of the extreme religious right—and once again convicted and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. So obvious was this travesty that he received a presidential pardon at the end of 1899. But it was not until July 1906 that the Court of Appeals annulled the Rennes verdict and opened the way for Dreyfus's reinstatement in the ranks. In the course of that seven-year interval, Zola had died (or quite possibly been murdered, though Harris does not even discuss this possibility), the political left had won the legislative elections, and the National Assembly had passed a law on the separation of church and state.

Quite possibly, then, had the anti-Dreyfusards not been so brutishly intransigent, the lasting damage to their cause might have been more limited. They really didn't know how to give up: When Zola's ashes were finally transferred to the Panthéon as late as 1908, a reactionary fanatic opened fire during the ceremony and hit Dreyfus in his arm. The would-be assassin was later acquitted. French justice was still partially blind in the right eye. On the very eve of the First World War, the great Jean Jaurès was shot in the back by another ultranationalist.

In some ways, then, Harris's narrative actually enhances the traditional picture of good triumphing over injustice, with the French secular left wearing the white hat. But she expertly identifies the exceptions. In spite of the lion-like role played by Jaurès, founder of the modern French left, there were many socialists who identified the Jews with capitalism and who wanted to de-Judaize the whole issue for tactical reasons. Charles Maurras, I was somewhat surprised to learn, opportunistically employed the imagery of martyred blood and the Sacred Heart—France herself being the Christ-figure betrayed by loathsome Iscariots—without having any real Catholic

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convictions of his own. In comparable ways, many who detested Catholicism made emotional use of the image of Dreyfus as the victim of a new Calvary. Still, nothing can efface the foul record of the Assumptionist and other Catholic factions, who quite simply and ardently saw the Dreyfus case as the occasion for a final solution to the Jewish question, as well as an excuse to settle accounts with Protestants and Freemasons. They took especial delight in the fact that Zola was himself prosecuted on the anniversary of the Virgin Mary's seventh apparition at Lourdes, a shrine which Zola had previously subjected to ridicule. Their easy resort to violence and their hatred for democracy marks them out as the spiritual ancestors of those who, mustered under the Croix de Feu in the 1930s, bellowed that they preferred Adolf Hitler to the Jewish Socialist Léon Blum (himself an early and distinguished Dreyfusard).

There had been nothing like it since Voltaire had unmasked his batteries against throne and altar in the *cause célèbre* of Jean Calas, a French Protestant first framed and then broken on the wheel. But Voltaire was defending a man who was already horribly dead, while Dreyfus remained reproachfully on the scene until his death in 1935. Several of his descendants were murdered by the Nazis, more than one of them in combat against the occupation. And was it not Vichy that recast the French coinage to read "Famille, Travail, Patrie" instead of the deathless trio of slogans from 1789? It seems quite thinkable to argue that the "*laicization*" of French society was a direct consequence of the Dreyfus wars, social and ideological and religious. Harris is to be thanked for the care and measure of her sifting and weighing, and for the deep historical perspective that she brings to the undertaking.

Today in Paris, and in other French cities, there are neighborhoods where it is physically risky to be a Jew, and where raucous clerics openly insult and try to subvert the secular republic. Faced with this challenge a century later, the French left has not been able to find itself a comfortable or uncompromising position. The lesson of the Dreyfus case may well be that the search for such a position is a futile as well as a degrading one. ♦

B&A

Odysseus at Home

The travels are over but the adventure goes on.

BY BRYANT KIRKLAND

The Lost Books of the Odyssey
A Novel
by Zachary Mason
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 240 pp., $24

Like all great ancient epics, Homer's *Odyssey* begins *in medias res*, but it is less frequently noted that it ends that way, too. When Odysseus gets home to Ithaca, he seems to have finished his journeying. He hasn't. This we know from a clue in Book 11, when Odysseus, visiting the Underworld, meets the prophet Tiresias. The soothsayer warns Odysseus of the dire consequences that await him if his men kill Helios' cattle and of the hardships he will face at home in Ithaca. Home isn't the end for Odysseus, as Tiresias relates: "Once you have killed those suitors in your halls— / by stealth or in open fight with slashing bronze— / go forth once more, you must." What follows is the strange prophecy that Odysseus will enter a realm so remote that its inhabitants will mistake his oar for a winnowing fan. Planting this oar in the earth as an offering, Tiresias says, Odysseus will finally placate the sea god Poseidon and attain peace.

So the prophecy ends. Odysseus moves on, and the reader may even come to forget this curious prediction. After all, the last part of what Tiresias describes—the part about the oar—never takes place within the *Odyssey*. The prophecy, then, extends Odysseus' story beyond the scope of Homer's poem. Tiresias' prediction requires others after Homer to tell Odysseus' fate.

Zachary Mason is one such teller, and one for whom we should be grateful. This debut novel is a lithe and sensationally imagined response to the invitation implicit in Tiresias' words. Mason, a California computer scientist in his thirties, does far more than simply imagine a sequel to Odysseus' adventures after Ithaca: In this collection of 44 episodes, he has supplemented the canonical Homer with something like the Gnostic Gospels of Homer, "lost books" that challenge, expand, and often undermine what we thought we knew of an already wily Odysseus.

Mason's tales contradict and revise both the traditional Homer and often each other. And though they whimsically unmoor anything like a received tradition, they are evidence of something traditionally Homeric: The irrepressible pleasure both raconteur and audience experience in the art of good storytelling, even if the storyteller bends the truth. Mason's Odysseus is no less protean than his Homeric forebear, and that's precisely what is attractive. Evidence of Mason's ability to rewrite Homer is on glittering display in a story like "Killing Scylla," where he imagines the carcasses of Helios' slaughtered cattle as the ruse by which Odysseus lures Scylla from her lair. (The epic events are grimmer: The cattle are killed and Odysseus' men are punished at sea.) Mason's sketch of Scylla, a creature both repugnant and pathetic, is rendered in the limpid prose characteristic of this novel:

> . . . the breeze held and pulled her necks taut as lyre strings. I shivered at her wet, almost musical shrieking as her corpulent body was slowly pulled out of her cavern and into the sunlight, her claws scrabbling for purchase on the guano-slimed stone of her aerie till she reached the edge, clung for a moment, overbalanced and plummeted toward the sea where she landed with the sound of a siege-stone hitting a wall and disappeared under a mountain of foam.

Bryant Kirkland is a writer in New York.

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Just before he kills Scylla, Odysseus notices that the monster's seventh head is that of a young woman "with milk-white skin and sodden filthy hair." Her final haunting words transform the story's timbre, and what up to that point had been a chapter reliant on suspense and the hero's cunning resolves on a quiet note. The monster suddenly seems human, vulnerable, and the image complicates the heroic thrust of the tale.

Such modulations of tone, between adventure-story and poignant detail, inflect the entire novel. The "lost books" often center upon loss itself, one of the original thematic vertebrae of the *Odyssey*. But in Mason's hands loss is heightened to a more existential level. Instead of losing his men, or Penelope, Odysseus is conscious at times of losing himself altogether. In "The Book of Winter," a man finds himself snowbound in a cabin, uncertain who he is and why he is there. He discovers a book behind the firewood that turns out to be the story of Odysseus. Upon reading and rereading, he realizes that the story is, in fact, *his* story. He has literally become the No One he had called himself as a disguise. No longer Odysseus, he burns the book, "every sin erased," ready to start a new life. The story offers one of the various scenes in which Mason's Odysseus stands outside his own identity, painfully aware of its mutability. This postmodern Odysseus comprehends the idea of "Odysseus."

One of Mason's other accomplishments is to give us a set of Odysseus figures who inhabit both the Homeric world of monsters and gods as well as the rich psychological atmosphere of a contemporary novel. In one episode, Odysseus returns to Ithaca to find that Penelope, "hardly aged and oddly quiet," refuses to greet him. When he touches her, he discovers that she is dead, her image a wraith of the living Penelope. The dead image, we can surmise, is Odysseus' own construction, preserved from the past and imposed upon an implacably changed present. In such a story, Penelope's presence doesn't demonstrate her own enduring spirit; it represents Odysseus' psychological need to conjure her after his many losses.

In a different episode called "Epiphany," Odysseus must face the possibility of a romantic relationship with his divine sponsor Athena:

> I was aboard ship checking every cable, line and sail, to ensure that all was seaworthy after a decade aground on the beach. She was there with me, suddenly, and as always in her presence I saw the world in sharper relief. . . . She had on a plain white dress and, disconcertingly, wore her hair down—she looked almost girlish. I had seen her brighter but never so warm. I was ashamed to find myself desiring her and violently quashed the impulse.
>
> I remember her every word and every intonation. I will not repeat what she said, though it will always echo in my daydreams. The broad sense of it was that she was offering me everything. Which is to say, herself. And as the husband of an Olympian, one of the greatest in strength and honor (as she quite correctly reminded me), I would be given immortality. We would have all eternity together. All would fear us and love us and no one could ever touch us.

Odysseus and the Sirens, ca. 480-470 B.C.

THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM / ART RESOURCE

The title "Epiphany," which can refer both to Athena's divine appearance and to Odysseus' consequent revelation, holds both characters together—even as Odysseus' epiphany dictates why he must separate from her. His thoughts exemplify Mason's elegant swirl of modern and ancient. They trace psychological contours available to contemporary fiction, but they also pinpoint the stark divide between mortal and divine fundamental to ancient epic:

> I need hardly add that I could not accept her. What would I do, be her Ganymede, fetching wine and beaming while she spoke with her equals, her pretty boy with scars, wrinkles and sun-black skin? Or, worse, I could master her, be a proper husband and make her my helpmeet and bed-mate, have her wait on me while I spoke with Father Zeus on kingly matters. The idea is absurd. Even if it could be otherwise, she is beautiful and quick and her mind is like a lightning flash but she is a god, and therefore remote, and I cannot imagine her as anything else.

Still other episodes show us Odysseus indirectly, refracting him through different characters. In "Alexander's Odyssey," Alexander the Great stands at the Indian border, salivating for further conquest, but his troops refuse to advance. In the story's final moments, Alexander, whom ancient sources report styled himself an avatar of Achilles, realizes that, in losing command of his troops, he is transforming from one epic hero to the other. "I have set out," he muses, "to be Achilles and ended up no more than Odysseus of endless contrivance."

For all its endless contrivance, we should be aware that Mason's revisionism constitutes a tradition in its own right. In the fifth century B.C. Herodotus was already querying the Homeric version of the Helen story, going so far as to suggest that she hid out in Egypt during the Trojan War. And Greek lyric poets before Herodotus had wittily debunked Homeric orthodoxies. Homer has always invited tinkerers.

All the same, to locate Zachary Mason in this vast faculty of revisionists is not to diminish his literary panache and intellectual verve. Nor is it

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to suggest that his novel comes swathed in cheap irony. The range of the novel evokes the inventiveness of Odysseus himself. The constant ruptures of content—Odysseus is different from episode to episode—never obscure Mason's formal consistency. That consistency inheres in his ability to spin a good yarn, chapter after chapter.

For all we know, Odysseus is still wandering inland with that oar. Will we recognize him? ♦

B&A

Truer Than Fiction

Brideshead re-revisited.

BY HENRIK BERING

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Evelyn Waugh wanted to serve his country. At 36, he was not exactly in the prime of youth, but with Winston Churchill intervening on his behalf, he was commissioned in the Royal Marines and later transferred to the Commandos. As an officer, he initially enjoyed the easy camaraderie of the mess—though his impudence might occasionally have caused heartburn for his commander. As when he found it imperative to ask a visiting dignitary if it were really true that, in the Romanian Army, no one beneath the rank of major was permitted to wear lipstick.

Mad World
Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Brideshead
by Paula Byrne
Harper, 384 pp., $25.99

Waugh was physically fearless. But his participation in some of the foul-ups of the war, notably the evacuation from Crete, soured him on military life, and while recovering from a minor parachute injury at the end of 1943 he was granted leave to write what became *Brideshead Revisited*. Describing it as his magnum opus, *Brideshead* was meant by Waugh as an elegy over a way of life that was becoming extinct and supplanted by egalitarian drabness. For him, the country house was the very essence of England; and like his alter ego, *Brideshead's* narrator Charles Ryder, who captures these houses in paint before they become deserted and gutted, Waugh saw it his duty to preserve their spirit in print.

Henrik Bering is a writer and critic.

How that novel came to be created is the focus of this elegant study. Desiring to "liberate biography from the shackles of comprehensiveness," Paula Byrne has chosen to portray Waugh through his connections with one family, the Lygons of Madresfield Court (known familiarly as Mad) in the Malvern Hills, which provided much of the inspiration for *Brideshead*. In so doing, she provides keen insights into how his imagination operated and explores some of the accusations made against Waugh, particularly his snobbishness.

Evelyn Waugh came from a solid bourgeois background. His father was the managing director of Chapman and Hall, the publishing firm which owned the copyrights to Charles Dickens. Waugh attended Lancing, a second-tier public school, followed by Oxford where, in his third term, he suddenly found himself moving in more rarified circles. At a party he met Harold Acton, the flamboyant leader of the Oxford aesthetes in the early 1920s, and was invited to join the Hypocrites, a club dedicated to boozing and dining. The Hypocrites also had a strong homosexual bent, with Acton and his fellow Etonian Brian Howard setting the tone: Howard with his affected stammer, Acton with his fondness for declaiming the poetry of T. S. Eliot through a megaphone from his window. In manner, dress, and speech they offered a permanent challenge to what they termed "the bourgeois macabre."

Just as important, Waugh also met Hugh Lygon among the Hypocrites, who became one of the three attachments Waugh formed in his homosexual phase at Oxford. Anthony Powell once described Lygon as "a Giotto angel living in a narcissistic dream," strolling along High Street with a teddy bear. Back then, Byrne notes, Pembroke, Lygon's college, was known for catering to the "cream" of Oxford; i.e., "the rich and thick."

The Lygon family was at the very apex of British society. Its head, the Earl Beauchamp, was a Knight of the Garter who carried the sword of state at King George V's coronation. He was a prominent member of the Liberal party and chancellor of the University of London. He was also a rampant homosexual, with a "persistent weakness for footmen." At Madresfield, Byrne writes, the servants' hands "were said to be glittering with diamonds." She quotes Harold Nicolson's diary about a dinner party, where Nicholson was asked by his dinner companion, "Did I hear Beauchamp whisper to the butler 'Je t'adore?'"

"Nonsense," Nicholson replied, "he said 'shut the door.'"

Actually, he hadn't. When Beauchamp's children invited male friends to stay, they were encouraged to lock their bedroom doors. The next morning, His Lordship would grouse that "he's very nice that friend of yours, but he's damned uncivil." All this was a well-known secret in aristocratic circles, but when Beauchamp's behavior during a trip to Australia in 1931 caused a scandal, his brother-in-law the Duke of Westminster and (so circumstances suggest) Buckingham Palace took action. The royal princes had been guests at Madresfield, and Prince George, the future Duke of Kent, had a fling with one of Hugh Lygon's sisters, Lady Mary. Prince George was what is known as a "problem" royal: an inveterate partygoer who could be seen kicking his top hat down London streets at dawn. Among his mistresses Byrne lists a Kenyan expatriate from the British enclave of "Happy Valley" named Kiki Preston, known as

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"the girl with the silver syringe," who kept him supplied with cocaine. Of course, he was bisexual—Noël Coward was one of his lovers—but the royal family could scarcely afford a scandal connecting him to Lord Beauchamp and his merry footmen. The earl was forced to resign his posts and go into exile.

Into this headless house Evelyn Waugh, now well on his way to becoming a celebrated novelist, was invited as a guest that same year. With the Beauchamp children, especially Lady Mary and Lady Dorothy, he formed a close bond, with its very own coded language. "The accumulation of common experiences, private jokes, and private language lies at the foundation of English friendship," wrote Waugh. His role at Madresfield was court jester: "They loved a man who was willing to say the unsayable," writes Byrne.

According to Byrne, *Brideshead Revisited* offers a toned-down, compressed version of Waugh's own story and the Lygon saga. The Oxford sections are generally regarded as among the best ever written about the place, and the dreaming spires, pealing church bells, exquisite meals, and golden paradise of youth, though dripping with decadence, are tastefully done and extremely funny. In Anthony Blanche, a composite of Acton and Howard, Waugh created one of his great comic characters. The affair between Ryder and Sebastian is handled, more or less, with discretion.

Of course, the reality was more sordid. Byrne offers a catalogue of drunken debauchery and sexual depravity, with dons such as Maurice Bowra acting as go-betweens and arrangers for student liaisons. After the Oxford passages in *Brideshead*, the tone darkens: Retaining its sumptuous descriptions of exotic locales in Venice and Morocco, the novel becomes a religious drama of redemption though suffering and dissolution. In his downward spiral Sebastian Flyte (whose name is no coincidence) achieves a kind of sainthood, his sister Julia gives up marrying Charles Ryder to atone for her sins, and Lord Marchmain has his deathbed conversion. God allows his creatures to stray, Waugh suggests, but reels them back in at the end.

Here, too, the raw material was cleaned up. The homosexuality of the Earl Beauchamp, whom Waugh met in Rome in 1932, was no doubt a little too rich to make it into the novel. Instead, in the *Brideshead* version, Lord Marchmain becomes an outcast because of a liaison with a mistress. The family saga did not end happily. Hugh Lygon descended into a Sebastian-like spiral—his turns as a bank official, car salesman, and horse trainer all failed—and he died at 31, fracturing his skull in a drunken stupor. When Earl Beauchamp died, his eldest son inherited Madresfield Court, which meant that the sisters had to move out. Tainted by scandal, they never married into the British aristocracy: Lady Mary, who provided much of the inspiration for Julia, married a penniless Russian prince in exile and became an alcoholic, supported discreetly by Waugh. Lady Dorothy—Cordelia in *Brideshead*—became an archivist at Christie's, handling her changed circumstances with dignity and good humor. Even Evelyn Waugh, in many respects, became a caricature of himself as country squire and professional reactionary.

And yet, as Byrne points out, he had a sharper eye than that: Sebastian Flyte is a Peter Pan who refuses to grow up, and is deeply self-destructive. The hearty members of the Bullingdon Club are described as bullies and barbarians, savages in dark blue tailcoats. As for his Roman Catholicism, as Waugh liked to point out, in Britain Catholics tend to be found among the poor, not the rich. Writing about *Brideshead* in the late 1950s, he admitted that it was "infused with a kind of gluttony for food and wine, for the splendors of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language which now . . . I find distasteful."

As for the place itself, Madresfield Court is a mixture of Tudor and Victorian Gothic. In *Brideshead*, the house is neo-Palladian, which explains the use of Castle Howard in the BBC series of the early 1980s; but unlike the fictional Brideshead, Madresfield was not requisitioned by the army during World War II because it was designated for the princesses Elizabeth and Margaret in case of emergency. They never had to seek refuge there. ♦

B&A

Cases in Point

Understanding the rules of law and the laws of rhetoric. **BY JAMES SEATON**

Law and Literature
Third Edition
by Richard A. Posner
Harvard, 592 pp., $24.95

Richard Posner has never been seriously considered for the Supreme Court, despite his impressive credentials as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is not a liberal Democrat and not exactly a conservative, but what really makes him impossible is not his politics but his publications. If a judge ambitious for higher office avoids leaving a paper trail, Posner has proved beyond cavil that he seeks to go no further than the Seventh Circuit. His paper trail adds up, at last count, to around 65 books and monographs on topics ranging from the legal—on the economic analysis of law, antitrust cases, property law, famous judges (Cardozo and Holmes)—to current events—the 2000 election, 9/11, the 2008 economic crisis and its aftermath—to what have you: aging, obesity, sex, public intellectuals, and plagiarism.

James Seaton, professor of English at Michigan State, is the editor of George Santayana's The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy *and* Character and Opinion in the United States.

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He has also written and rewritten the most comprehensive study of the connections between law and literature. *Law and Literature: A Misunderstood Relation* came out in 1988, followed by a "revised and enlarged edition" 10 years later, and now by a third edition, simply titled *Law and Literature*.

Posner, whose 1988 survey of the field left him feeling that "the extent to which law and literature have been mutually illuminated is modest," now finds enough going on to justify a nearly 600-page revision which nevertheless concludes with two warnings against extravagant claims by proponents of law and literature studies. Law professors and literary theorists, he writes, "need to abandon efforts, so far fruitless and likely to remain so, to apply principles of literary interpretation to statutes and to provisions of the Constitution." The same parties, furthermore, "need to give up on efforts to humanize the practice of law by immersing judges, lawyers, and law students in literary works, unrelated to law, selected for ideological reasons, and viewed through the prism of moralistic literary criticism."

To Posner's first admonition, those even casually acquainted with contemporary theorizing in English departments and law schools can only say amen. Judges already inclined to esoteric interpretations of the meaning of the language of the Constitution do not need encouragement from the likes of a Stanley Fish explaining that "the Constitution cannot be drained of meaning because it is not a repository of meaning." Likewise, Posner's objections to a Martha Nussbaum arguing that the best fiction invariably confirms a left-liberal view of the world, or a Robin West asserting that Kafka's fiction reveals the folly of capitalism, are entirely persuasive.

The soundness of Posner's critiques does not, however, guarantee the validity of his own views. In law he considers himself a "pragmatist," which seems to mean, among other things, that a judge is right to consider other matters than the law itself in rendering a decision. Posner rightly rejects the attempts of literary theorists to "deconstruct" legal texts. Those troubled by the thought of a postmodernist legal system, in which concepts like "truth" have no place, are unlikely to be satisfied with Posner's view of such notions as mere "language games" finally irrelevant to a judge: "The pragmatist, while not doubting that right and wrong and true and false have useful roles to play in a variety of language games, doubts that justifying the decision in a close case is one of them."

Posner's theorizing about literature and criticism is also unsatisfying and unnecessarily reductive, while his observations about particular texts are often much more perceptive and more interesting than his theory would seem to allow. Looking at the history of literary criticism, Posner descries two major schools, the "aesthetic tradition" and the "edifying tradition." The first believes that literary works offer no insight about moral questions or human life in general that cannot be provided, with more precision, by history or the social sciences. Thus, criticism's only proper role is commentary on the only truly significant aspect of a poem, play, or novel: its formal properties. The edifying tradition believes that literature should teach clear moral lessons but, noticing that it often fails to do so, considers most poetry, fiction, and drama dangerous to social harmony.

On Posner's presentation, both seem more artificial constructs than real traditions. Posner himself seems to be the only member of the first group; he says he aligns himself with Oscar Wilde—"I accept Wilde's dictum—the creed of aestheticism, of art for art's sake"—but concedes that Wilde himself wasn't a true believer. (The narrator of Wilde's most famous book makes it clear that literature can and often does have a powerful moral impact for good or ill when he declares that "Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book.")

Posner lists "Plato, Tolstoy, Bentham, and the Puritans" in the second group, an incongruous band with little in common beyond a suspicion of literature and a certainty that the social good required the promotion of their views, and preferably only their views. Although Posner doesn't believe in "edifying," he seems to think this group has good grounds for their suspicions. In his view, "the classics . . .are brimful of moral atrocities . . . the world of literature is a moral anarchy."

Posner is thus at odds with a tradition of criticism he fails to mention, the central humanistic tradition of Western literary criticism which, despite sharp differences of philosophy and taste, has consistently affirmed that great literature unites literary or aesthetic quality with insight into human life. This tradition begins with Aristotle ("poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history") and continues through Horace ("usefulness with pleasure"), Longinus ("sublimity in all its truth and beauty exists in such works as please all men at all times"), Sir Philip Sidney ("the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher"), and Samuel Johnson ("Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature") down to Lionel Trilling ("literature is the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty").

Posner suggests that his formalist view of literature aligns him with New Critics, such as Cleanth Brooks, whom he rightly admires both for their analytic skills and ability to write for a general audience. The New Critics, like Posner, recognized that the paraphrasable "message" of even the greatest works is likely to be a banality. Brooks was even willing to accept with pride the charge of "formalism" made against the New Critics—with the all-important qualification that he rejected any notion of form as somehow divorced from content.

For Brooks, the task of the poet "is finally to unify experience" and a successful poem "triumphs over the apparently contradictory and conflicting elements of experience by unifying them into a new pattern." Thus the "form" important for Brooks and the New Critics is nothing mechanical or external, not a rhyme scheme or a verse form, but a "unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude." Literary works, the New Criticism suggested,

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are valuable in large part because they help us to make sense of our lives, to achieve an overall point of view in a world in which life often seems to be just one damn thing after another.

Brooks and others followed T. S. Eliot, who observed that, in ordinary experience, one "falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking," but "in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes."

The New Critics were thus part of the humanistic tradition. They believed that poetry and literature not only do provide aesthetic pleasure but also offer insight into human life by dramatizing ways to achieve a coherent outlook while honestly confronting the most disparate experiences. Brooks and the others argued that, for literature, "content" and "form" are inseparable; the "unification of attitudes" achieved in successful poems, plays, and novels is something far different and far more valuable than any paraphrasable "message" that could be extracted by divorcing content from form.

Posner, however, thinks differently. For him the "moral content" of a literary work "is merely the writer's raw material," no more relevant to the writer's achievement "than the value of the sculptor's clay as a building material is relevant to the artistic value of the completed sculpture." In arguing that literature has nothing interesting to say about human life, Posner disagrees not only with the humanistic tradition but with himself. He cannot help noticing in his discussions of particular works that great poems, plays, and stories *do* somehow manage to offer important insights into human life. Even the *Iliad*, an epic celebrating a patriarchal culture in which the most admirable quality is physical bravery in war, turns out to have an important lesson for our time, according to Posner.

"The *Iliad*," he shrewdly observes, "teaches not only the excessive character of the passion for revenge but also its fragility as a principle of social order." Meanwhile, readers of the *Odyssey* "are made to understand that reintegration into human society, though not itself a heroic destiny, is the best culmination of a heroic career."

Samuel Johnson admired Shakespeare but regretted that the great dramatist seemed "to write without any moral purpose." Posner, however, finds valuable moral lessons throughout Shakespeare. The audience of *Hamlet*, like the prince, "comes to understand the ease with which we evade responsibilities and rationalize our evasions and the lack of candor in human relations" and by the fifth act reaches "a hard-won understanding of the nature of the human condition." *Measure for Measure* provides "another lesson in the difference between public and private morality." Posner even finds a lesson for everyday life in Kafka's surrealistic short story *The Metamorphosis*, in which Gregor Samsa wakes up to find himself transformed into an insect:

> We all have Gregor's problem, though in less acute forms. We cannot make our aspirations fully understood or bring our self-conception into phase with the conception that others have of us.

It is fortunate that Posner rarely lets theory get in the way of readings; when he does, the results are unimpressive. Attempting to demonstrate that poetic greatness is compatible with simplistic meaning, Posner declares that Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* is "wonderful poetry" but nothing more than "a fairy tale in verse" and that "the beauty of the nightingale's song reconciles the narrator . . . to death." Eager to make his point, Posner apparently failed to read to the end of this short poem: Keats's narrator soon realizes that, in death, he would be only a corpse—"a sod." No longer allowing the nightingale's song to reconcile him to death, the narrator rejects the appeal of "faery lands forlorn," reflecting that "the fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf." Keats's poem powerfully contrasts the attractiveness of the idea of death against the unattractive finality of the thing itself. *Ode to a Nightingale* is, indeed, "wonderful poetry," but truly "wonderful" in the way its beauty and its wisdom are inextricably linked.

Posner's theorizing about literature would not have contradicted his own experience as an attentive reader if he had developed the implications of John Gross's observation (which Posner quotes with seeming approval) that "dramatic imagination, when it is pitched at the Shakespearean level, becomes a moral quality, a form of humanism." Arguing that the imaginative identification promoted by literature has nothing to do with morality, Posner gets his history wrong as well as literature when he claims that Hitler, "with his unparalleled insight into the hopes and fears of tens of millions of Europeans must have had one of the most highly developed empathetic capacities in history." Except during World War II, when his "empathetic capacities" egregiously underestimated the fighting capabilities of the British, the Russians, and the Americans.

Still, Judge Posner writes with lucidity and directness, so that even where one disagrees, he stimulates and clarifies. His characterizations of the contemporary academic scene are refreshingly cogent, as when he points to the motive behind the replacement of literary studies with cultural studies in so many English departments: "To knock literature off its pedestal and find vehicles easier than literary works for making political points." We can only applaud when Posner calls on the law and literature movement to pay less attention to trendy cultural studies and more to criticism "by great literary journalists, such as Edmund Wilson and George Orwell, but also criticism written by academics of an earlier generation who wrote for a general audience"—all of whom, however, were part of the humanistic tradition he ignores.

Posner's distaste for academic grand theory in both law and literature is well justified. His own theorizing, unfortunately, fails to do justice to the many perceptive close readings and broad learning evident in this latest edition of *Law and Literature*. ♦

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B&A

Out and About

Self-consciously hip, disappointingly conventional.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The Kids Are All Right is a gay movie with gay themes made by a gay director about a long-term lesbian couple with this shocking message: Gay relationships can be just as tiresome as straight relationships, if not more so. If such a revelation floats your boat, *The Kids Are All Right* is the not particularly funny summer comedy for you.

In one respect, *The Kids Are All Right* is a fascinating document, because it is entirely devoid of explicit social commentary. There are no speeches about the difficulties of living a gay life; the kids of the title are not forced to defend their two moms against the harsh words of classmates; the characters do not feel or act oppressed.

Now, take away any frisson that comes from watching Julianne Moore and Annette Bening get all sapphic with each other. Then take away the hardee-har-har plot in which the too-cool-for-school anonymous donor whose seed was used to create the "kids" many years earlier becomes a disruptive part of the family. What is left is a pseudo-comic, pseudo-intimate account of the pains of adolescence and the difficulties of marriage that is neither amusing nor particularly insightful. And it's rather gross, though not for the reasons you might think.

The movie's cowriter and director, Lisa Cholodenko, previously was responsible for several rather arch independent films, like *High Art*, about a junkie lesbian photographer, and *Laurel Canyon*, in which a man's straightlaced fiancée is so liberated by his mother's bohemian ways that she ends up making out with the woman. Despite the fact that she (together with Stuart Blumberg) came up with a plot that could have been the next Adam Sandler summer blockbuster, Cholodenko is desperately concerned with maintaining her indie cred. And so she insists on lacing this extremely PC sitcom with bits of business and dialogue designed to discomfit and discombobulate the more mainstream audience she wishes to win over: hideous sexual chatter between teenagers in one scene, the repulsive deployment of electric sexual devices and pornography in another. Do kids talk this way in real life? Sure. Do people use these aids? Evidently. But as Jackie Mason once said, "People have sex. But they also have soup. How come in a movie, no one ever has soup?"

The Kids Are All Right
Directed by Lisa Cholodenko

The theme running through Cholodenko's work is that there is no "normal," and that efforts to confine people to conventional categories are counterproductive and soul-killing. It's that whole Walt Whitman "I contain multitudes" affect, and it helps explain her insistence on including the offputting details and dialogue.

Thus, everyone in *The Kids Are All Right* is torn. Annette Bening may be living an alternative lifestyle, but she is a controlling bourgeois drunk. Julianne Moore is the hippie free spirit of the couple, but she's also a frustrated housewife. Their 15-year-old son Laser is hungry for the kind of manly physical affection his friend and his friend's father enjoy, but his friend abuses animals because he is so busy repressing his own homosexual impulses. Their 18-year-old daughter Joni is the ultimate good girl grade-getter, disgusted by the easy sexuality of her buddy and unable to express her own feelings toward a soft and sweet boy. And the donor is embodied by Mark Ruffalo in yet another version of the immensely charming but entirely immature manboys he always plays.

But all of this self-consciously stark honesty about life's disappointments fits uncomfortably with the Sandlerian plot line. The general unease is amplified by the performances of the lead actresses. They don't seem very comfortable in their lesbianism, and seem to be going at their parts with grim determination rather than complete commitment. That's especially true of Julianne Moore, who has the better and juicier part as the more unfocused and desperate of the two. She seems relieved when the plot has her getting physical with Ruffalo; there isn't a trace of the awkwardness she has whenever she's in a clench with Bening. And clench is the *mot juste* for Bening, whose entire body seems to be rebelling against the part she's playing.

The Kids Are All Right is the second movie this year, after the brilliant though equally discomfiting *Greenberg*, that attempts a conscious echo of the loose, grainily photographed, sun-dappled Southern California cinema of the 1970s, as seen in Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* and Hal Ashby's *Shampoo*, among many others. But it's not the right look for a marital farce, which is what *The Kids Are All Right* is in part, or for a family drama, which *The Kids Are All Right* is in part, or for a teen identity picture, which *The Kids Are All Right* is in part, or for an overgrown slacker study, which *The Kids Are All Right* is in part.

All these parts add up to an ungainly and unsteady whole. This is what happens when you try to contain multitudes in a ludicrous receptacle. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

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"NASA Administrator Charles Bolden said in a recent interview that his 'foremost' mission as the head of America's space exploration agency is to improve relations with the Muslim world."

—Foxnews.com, *July 5, 2010*

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Middle East space leap 'amazing,' says Obama

TOLERANCE, INCLUSION PRAISED

Texas-size Asteroid hurling toward U.S.

BY WEDGE ANTILLES

SABRINA MATUS

An asteroid approaching the Midwest was hailed by former president Obama as "an amazing achievement by our Middle East friends."

Former president Barack Obama called NASA's outreach program to the Middle East a signal achievement and a major part of his legacy. From his home on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, Obama spoke proudly of former NASA administrator Charles Bolden's efforts to include the Muslim world in space exploration, particularly the governments of Syria and Iran. "I remember at the time how critical the press was about NASA's involvement in outreach and diversity issues," said the president. "But how wrong they were. For who would have guessed Presidents Assad and Ahmadinejad would have been so enthusiastic about our sharing space technology with them? Who would have guessed they too would be interested in exploring the cosmos and our universal origins? Who would have guessed they would be particularly interested in altering the trajectories of comets and asteroids?"

Obama said little, however, about the Texas-sized asteroid currently heading for the central United States, which experts believe is the result of tampering by the recently launched spacecraft Hezbollah I. "Now is not the time to panic," he said. "You did say 'central United States,' right?" Meanwhile, Charles Bolden, who teaches astrophysics at King Saud University, called the recent developments "curious" and noted that cataclysmic craters have always been a part of Earth's history. "Frankly, such an event will probably hasten the return of the occluded imam," he said.

Islamic militants rejoiced upon hearing news that an asteroid was hurling toward the Great Satan and heaped praise on the pilot of Hezbollah I, Admiral Ackbar. Republicans, on the other hand, were irate and vowed to take swift action. "We will not simply sit here and let this radical Islamic rock hit America. That's not the America I know. Do we have a plan to fight back and kick that asteroid in the teeth? You betcha," said President Sarah

DEEP IMPACT CONTINUED ON A6

Gore released on good behavior

the weekly Standard
JULY 19, 2010

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